The Thesis Committee for Mariana Estrada
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Jia Zhangke's *Shijie* and China's Changing Global Space

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Chien-hsin Tsai

Robert M. Oppenheim

Jia Zhangke's *Shijie* and China's Changing Global Space

by

Mariana Estrada, B.A.

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2009

Abstract

Jia Zhangke's *Shijie* and China's Changing Global Space

Mariana Estrada, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

Supervisor: Chien-hsin Tsai

This paper explores tourism and space-making in modern China through the lens of Sixth Generation Chinese filmmaker Jia Zhangke. His film *Shijie* (*The World)* features people whose lives play out in and around a Chinese theme park of the same name. Through its portrayal of theme parks and the social stratum who visit and inhabit them, *Shijie* depicts both the filmmaker's opinion of China's modernization project, as well as his evolving status within the Chinese international/national film system. As China's interest in its global image is being transformed through its media products, its concept of global and local space is also changing. The Olympic Village created for the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics can be seen as an attempt at physically and symbolically engineering China's new global space. This paper will consider Jia Zhangke, *The World*, and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as several points along a continuum that leads toward a new envisioning of global space in China.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In an increasingly technologically advanced and accessible world, imagining any place in the world is as simple as a trip to Google Maps. One can type in a state, city, and street address and in a few seconds zoom in from an image of the planet Earth, down through space, parting the clouds and arriving at a real on-the-street view of the destination, complete with cars and people frozen in the poses of their everyday lives. What today is thought of as an instantaneous and objective process of *locating* in space was, until fairly recently, a complex and highly charged process of *imagining.* The world was at least a mere concept, too remote to be relevant, or at most it was everywhere and everything, too massive to be apprehended. Likely the average person in the 19th century never gave it much thought, preoccupied with life's day-to-day trials and tribulations, until something came along to change her way of thinking. Combining novelty to attract and keep the senses, with technology to prove the promises of things to come, International Expositions, or World's Fairs, opened 19th century America's eyes.[1] Ostensibly created to generate trade by presenting the wares and cultures of other countries, World's Fairs combined the business of industrial aims with the pleasure of amusement centers and exotic sights. Increasingly, following each fair's run its facilities were left standing, particularly its most profitable section the Midway. It was from these Midways that theme parks evolved, including the world's most recognizable--Disneyland.

[1] Although not the first nation to hold World Fair's, it was the American variety and combination of exhibits, education and entertainment that combined to form the precursor to the theme park. Distinct from amusement parks, theme parks are characterized by their all-encompassing theme. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of "theming."

As World's Fairs evolved into theme parks, a concept of the world and world space was also evolving. World's Fairs created a narrative of America and the world, using the twin themes of nationalism and capitalism, and prominently featuring the role of technology to solve social and political problems.[2] The Fair's theme, exhibits, and staged environment were all designed to foreground America's standing in the global community, technologically, at times militarily and always ideologically. In the early 20th century, America was portrayed as a nation destined to lead and first to find a way from current hardships to the "promised land of material abundance."[3] Disneyland and other theme parks that followed in the footsteps of World's Fairs built on their established methods, "concentrating on popular science, mass amusements, patriotic nostalgia, and industrialized mythology" to create a unique world within their walls.[4] But it is another feature of the parks that best highlights their worldview-- the World Showcase. In just one section of the park, visitors could see the sites, hear the music and taste the flavors of a dozen countries. More than a fun-filled jaunt to exotic locales, the message reads, "the real nations of the world are essentially theme parks- World Showcase pavilions writ large."[5]

In China, too, the explosion in number and popularity of theme parks has signaled changing views about the world. China's isolationist past combined with the political excesses of recent history have created a largely negative image against which modernizing China has had to struggle. In order to accomplish its economic and social

---

[2] Robert Rydell, et al., *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) 133.
[3] Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993) 9.
[4] Neil Harris, "Expository Expositions: Preparing for the Theme Parks," *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*, Ed. Karal Ann Marling (Paris: Flammarion, 1997) 27.
[5] Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) 233.

aims on the world stage, it faces the task of molding the world's largest population into global citizens capable of representing China to the world. In achieving this goal, the educational system, technological advancement, and selective control over accessible media can only do so much. The people of China in the 21st century must understand the world and their real and potential place in it. As part of this project, theme parks in China have served two purposes; they have glorified a mythologized traditional China, as well as its future and globally-oriented counterpart. China is doubly themed as an ancient culture, rich in heritage and wisdom, and one whose time has come; in the diminutive world of theme parks, China stands as a sophisticated giant among miniatures.

Both tourist attractions and media productions like Jia Zhangke's 2004 film *Shijie*[6] are participating in the project of China's not simply imagining, but creating global space. Theme parks like the one depicted in *Shijie* create an image of world space different than that provided by television, movies, and the internet, an image that is simultaneously more and less real than the "real" thing. More real because a visitor can visit the park, take the elevator to the top of the small-scale Eiffel Tower, and have her picture taken holding up a Leaning Tower of Pisa. But it is less real because this is a leaning Tower she could actually hold up; it is only a few times her height. This manipulation of space and reality is a powerful one and can have a transformative effect on the image of "the world" created in the mind; the world becomes a magnificent, but manageable concept.

The circumstances surrounding *Shijie*'s production highlight China's efforts to make the world's image at home and remake China's image abroad. China's Sixth

[6] The English translation of the Chinese word and title of the film *Shijie* (世界) is "the world." Throughout this paper both titles will be used interchangeably.

generation[7] of Chinese filmmakers are known for their radically different approach to both filmmaking and content. Working outside the state-run studio system, these filmmakers chose alternative themes and audiences for their films. By cooperating with foreign production companies, they were able to produce and distribute their work without government approval or interference. Other directors chose to work within the system, ensuring that they would have domestic exposure, but also that they would be held within the confines of government censorship. The reforms in the mid-nineties and China's admission to the World Trade Organization in 2001 have meant a restructuring of the state-monopoly system toward market-driven production. For directors like Jia, this has meant increased opportunities to reach Chinese audiences and receive all the benefits of working within the system. Films are still vehicles for propaganda, but there has been an ideological shift. The country that once did not deign to trade with the Western powers is now determined to redefine itself as one among them, modern, powerful and cosmopolitan. As a director once banned for his refusal to work within the confines of the system, and later brought into the official fold, Jia Zhangke stands as a prime example of the dynamic between local and global ambitions in modern China.

This paper aims to explore how media and space combine to create an idea of global space in China today. In a society increasingly driven by consumer considerations and among a populace that now enjoys the fruits of leisure, original means are required to influence and shape the people's perceptions of their world. Jia Zhangke's film *Shijie* is a current and potent example of this project. Portraying the lives of the people who inhabit the World Park, a Beijing theme park displaying miniatures of the world's iconic

[7] Known by various monikers, the term Sixth generation refers to the first graduates of the prestigious Beijing Film Academy in the post-Tiananmen era (1989-present). The acceptance of this term, as well as the directors who are named among its members, are widely contested. However, for the purposes of this paper, the term Sixth generation will be used to designate the school of directing of which Jia Zhangke has become the most well-known member internationally.

monuments, the film vividly describes the reality of life in China underneath the gloss of modernization. *The World* can be read as a text about the evolution of global space in China; just as the film was born from the negotiation of viewpoints, traditional and modern, local and global, China's new global space would be born out of cooperation, concession, and the evolution of the Chinese worldview. The film participates in the modernization and globalization project, as does the space that it portrays; it acts as a premonition of things to come, namely a space created for purely global consumption, as was the Olympic Village built for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The discussion that follows is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 considers the growth of China's tourism industry from the perspective of its ancient China-centric worldview. Theme park development in late 1980s China is treated as a measured response to changes in that worldview. Chapter 2 explores the space of world parks like that in *Shijie* and the role that "theming" plays in accomplishing theme parks' ideological agendas. Previous attempts at creating "China" domestically and abroad, through space and theme will be highlighted. Chapter 3 will uncover the driving force behind China's development and the subjects of *Shijie*, rural migrant workers in the city. Their "imagined cosmopolitanism" complicates their understanding of the world and speaks to the director's ambivalent attitude toward China's "progress." Chapter 4 uses the production of *Shijie,* Jia's first foray into the official filmmaking system, as evidence of the multifaceted nature of China's image making strategies. A film about the world in China, made by a locally grown, internationally known filmmaker, *Shijie* mirrors China's attempts to remake its own image to an international audience. Chapter 5 will discuss how the 2008 Summer Olympics held in Beijing can be seen as another stage in China's modernization and development project. The significance of the Olympic Village and the Opening Ceremonies to China's changing concept of global space will be explored.

The order of the chapters is intended to show the evolution from a Chinese worldview that emphasized cultural and moral superiority to one that places emphasis on economic and technological prowess as markers of a modern, cosmopolitan nation. In creating the Olympic Village of the 2008 Olympics, a new kind of space was created, a global space capable of representing the new China to the world. Ultimately, this paper will examine how understanding *Shijie,* a film that both critiques and participates in the project, can inform our understanding of China's global space.

Chapter 1

The Evolution of Chinese Tourism

Leisure travel[8] in China has its origins in the ancient world. What was once the exclusive domain of the literati and religious pilgrims has evolved over centuries into a pastime for not just the wealthy, urban, or educated, but for people of all sectors of society. In addition, the mountains, religious shrines, and other scenic sites that were previously the primary destinations of travel are now being supplanted by so-called modern amusements. Chief among these has been the explosion in the number and type of theme parks in China and throughout South/East Asia. The changes in type and accessibility of leisure activities in China coincide with changes in China's view of its place in the global community. Infamously isolationist, China's opening up has also meant a transformation of its age-old view of itself as center of the world. Eager to "join up with the world" (*yu shijie jiegui*) economically, leisure and tourism have served dual purposes- in part a tool of economic development, in part as a means of altering old perceptions of world order.

In addition to rides, costumed shows and concessions, amusement parks offer a themed interpretation of folk legends, history and culture that run the gambit from Journey to the West to Windows of the World. Not all theme parks are successful; in fact, it is estimated that the average theme park in China will peak and reach the stagnation stage within one to two years.[9] No doubt, the management, location, price and particular

[8] Here, leisure travel needs to be differentiated from tourism. It was not until the 1980s in China that "tourism" in the sense of "the visiting of away places for pleasure and the business of arranging services related to said travel" could be said to have existed. As will be discussed, travel progressed along different lines for different strata of society, from an imperial matter to the privilege of the wealthy, and from matters of necessity to a more egalitarian pastime.

[9] Bao cited in John Ap, "An Assessment of Theme Park Development in China," *Tourism in China*. Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui (New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003) 199.

theme of each individual theme park all contribute to its success or failure, but how theme parks create a tourist experience is also significant. Are theme parks like that in *The World* catering to tourists' needs and tastes or creating them? Is *The World* reflective of an emerging awareness of tourists' place in the world in a newly mobile Chinese population? Or is it yet another strategy to create desire and boost consumption; if you build it, they will buy it?

This chapter will argue that the World Park and parks like it play an important role in the nation's economic and ideological plan, and provide one means by which people can participating in the project of "being modern." By briefly exploring the history and development of tourism in China and the evolution of modern-day tourism practices in China, this chapter will lay the groundwork for a discussion of how the film *The World* can inform our understanding of today's Chinese world.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEISURE TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN CHINA

A history of leisure travel in China is best begun with the long history of travel writing in the ancient world. Imperial inspection tours to the far reaches of the domain took their precedent from tales of the ancient sage-kings who paused at sacred sites to make offerings to Heaven and the spirits who resided there.[10] Court officials made records of their travels, usually for official business, but increasingly their accounts were not only of the conditions and geography of the landscape, but also of their personal impressions of it. By the mid-eighth century, conventions had been set for the form of the lyric travel account, but it was not until the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the travel account and travel diary began to flourish as a literary form. Unique to Chinese travel

[10] Richard E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 12.

writing was the practice of engraving a text at the original site of its creation.[11] An accumulation of inscriptions came to signify the importance of a place, which then elicited further visits and inscriptions. Eventually specific places accumulated a literary tradition worth visiting, and sites whose original location had been lost or forgotten were recreated as pilgrimage sites. During the sixteenth century leisure travel became a culturally acceptable activity for the upper classes, who based their itineraries on the prose or poetry travel writing of earlier travelers, especially Tang and Song dynasty (618-1279 C.E.) scholar-officials and cultural heroes such as Li Bo, Du Fu, Ouyang Xiu, Lu You and Su Shi.[12] The form of leisure travel they enjoyed was comprised of a large array of activities: "enjoying natural beauty, investigating history, communing with the past, and immortalizing these moments by composing a poem, painting a picture or writing a short essay."[13]

At this time, Chinese notions of travel and space did not conceive of the "international" or "global" as it is understood today. Due in large part to assumptions of cultural superiority and the belief in a celestial and mundane hierarchy, China's relationship with and knowledge of the rest of the world developed in a distinct way. Although China had engaged in trade with the Western world along the Silk Road for nearly 3,000 years, it was not until the 16th century that direct maritime trade began to take place. As trade and contact accelerated between China and the Western powers, the

---

[11] "By incorporating a text into the environment, the traveler sought to participate enduringly in the totality of the scene. He perpetuated his momentary experience and hoped to gain literary immortality based on a deeply held conviction that through such inscriptions, future readers would come to know and appreciate the writer's authentic self." (Strassberg 5)

[12] Pál Nyíri, *Scenic Spots: Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006) 7.

[13] Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü, "Introduction: Pilgrimage in China," *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, Eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) 18.

difference in their worldviews[14] led to serious conflict and volatile relations.[15] Until that point the Chinese worldview had gone largely unchallenged; the ancient cultural hub of East Asia received tribute from and at times ruled over its neighbors in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Set apart geographically and culturally from its Western and South Asian neighbors, the "Middle Kingdom," operated under a religio-cosmic belief system that gave it unique and universal moral authority over the civilized world.[16] The emperor, or Son of Heaven, was charged by Heaven to lead the world with his superior virtue, especially the barbarous peoples of the border regions and distant lands. Chinese responses to the incursion of the Western world ranged from condescending benevolence to an aggressive determination to bring the known world under the Chinese system.[17] No matter their approach they were unsuccessful in staving off Western incursion and manipulation. Ultimately, the endurance of a China-centered perspective and belief in a glorious and admired past would provide much of the underlying motivation for China's reforms and affect the course of its changing worldview.

Until the 20th century, for the majority of Chinese people without the time or wealth to pursue leisure activities, literary high travel was virtually unheard of, and travel itself was still largely associated with forced migrations and religious pilgrimage.[18] Tied to the land and hindered by dangerous roads, civil unrest, and poor infrastructure, most

---

[14] Operating under similar assumptions of cultural and racial superiority, Western colonial policy at this time can largely be summed up by Rudyard Kipling's infamous exhortation to the duty of empire, wherein the uncivilized world became the "White Man's Burden."

[15] Many name external pressure and internal unrest for the fall of dynastic China, but it was the Opium Wars and subsequent series of unequal treaties that are blamed for China's "150 years of humiliation" (at the hands of foreign powers).

[16] Benjamin I. Schwartz, "The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present," *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) 278.

[17] Ibid., 281.

[18] Laurie Haley, "Tourism with Chinese Characteristics: The State and the Market in China's Domestic Tourism Industry," Thesis (The University of Texas at Austin, 2007) 6.

Chinese citizens would not come to associate travel with leisure and pleasure until after the reform era began in 1979. Until that point, travel had been strictly controlled by the *hukou* household registration system, meaning that apart from official work-unit business or a yearly visit to one's family, the ordinary Chinese citizen rarely had the opportunity for any kind of travel. In addition, people had a latent sense of the activities (or lack thereof) that comprise the concept of "leisure." Up until the late eighties and into the nineties, "leisure" was characterized by: (1) the devotion of discretionary income to needs other than travel, (2) the small number and poor quality of available activities, (3) the difference between the kinds of activities available in urban and rural areas, and (4) the concentration of leisure activities around traditional holidays and the ritualization of the kinds of activities that were acceptable at those times.[19] During the reform era, along with massive restructuring of the Chinese economy to what was considered a capitalist mode, Deng Xiaoping advocated the development of the tourist industry as a means of alleviating poverty, creating jobs, developing urban areas and bringing in foreign capital. In the mid-eighties the focus was shifted from attracting solely international tourism to include domestic tourism development. Since that time, tourist attractions and activities have undergone impressive expansion and differentiation, becoming a market that accommodated 1.6 billion domestic travelers in 2007.[20]

RESOLVING CONFLICTING TOURISM PRACTICES: RED TOURISM AND SELF-DRIVING TOURISM

The tourism boom in China has given birth to a wide variety of tourism choices, including eco- or green tourism, health and well-being tourism, "Sunshine" beach

---

[19] Honggen Xiao, "Leisure in China," *Tourism in China*, Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui (New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003) 264-265.
[20] "Domestic Travel Set to Grow," *China Daily* 10 June 2008, 25 July 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-06/10/content_6747891.htm>.

vacations, ski vacations and gambling cruises. The development and popularity of each are reflective of the tensions between the state-driven and consumer-driven market. Whereas Chinese consumers have embraced their newly expanded leisure time and some Western modes of spending it, opting for more and better choices of activities, the Chinese government has been pushing a balance between freedom and the "revolutionary" values of struggle, thrift and sacrifice.[21] Illustrative of this relationship are two recent manifestations of Chinese tourism: Red Tourism and Self-driving Tourism. Both seek to take advantage of China's scenic and historical richness by encouraging travel through more routes and to more destinations. However, where in Self-driving Tourism the tourist can express his individual autonomy and personal tastes by taking control of the wheel, Red Tourism brings tourism to the cause of Socialism, highlighting revolutionary ideals and encouraging ideological development.

Historic communist sites and former revolutionary bases are being developed as the destinations for Red Tourism. In 2005, the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) declared the "Year of Red Tourism" and named "30 choice Red Tourism routes" and "100 classic Red Tourism sites."[22] The government maintains that Red Tourism will benefit the nation, the people and the Party, ideologically and economically by bringing revenue to poor, rural areas. Officials estimate that the Red Tourism programs will bring 20 billion yuan (2.41 billion US dollars) to these sites, at the same time stimulating non-tourism related sectors.[23]

---

[21] Haley 2.
[22] "Travel Sector Survives on 'Theme,'" *China Daily* 2 April 2005, 20 July 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/02/content_430352.htm>.
[23] "China Boosts 'Red Tourism' in Revolutionary Bases," *BBC Monitoring International Reports* 22 February 2005.

Self-driving Tourism is so named to emphasize that the tourist is behind the wheel, not part of a travel tour group and not being chauffeured in a rented vehicle. Because private car ownership is still a relatively rare phenomenon in Chinese society, the Self-driving tourist represents an elite class of tourist. "By mid-2002, four percent of Beijing households owned their cars…. [However] nearly 90 percent of new car buyers in Beijing are private owners."[24] The development of China's highway network provides increasing ease to a sector of new drivers, eager to explore the country and suburbs alike. Both routes and cars are chosen to express the personality and interests of the driver and provide a focus around which like-minded individuals can organize.[25]

Red Tourism and Self-driving Tourism show the degree to which the Chinese tourism industry has developed and differentiated, but in two different directions. Red Tourism shows a concern for a populace whose lives are changing so rapidly and drastically that they risk forgetting the ideals upon which their nation was founded. Self-driving Tourism allows more privileged citizens to roam free, and tailor their trips to meet their individual tastes. Today, the desire to bear in mind traditional values is balanced with the dream to embody new ones. China's continued prosperity and reputation on the world stage hinges on its citizens and in this lays the dilemma of modernizing China. How can it nurture a modern citizen with a revolution era ethos? How can it modify a long-held China-centric worldview to reflect China's current and potential place in the world order? How can it resolve the tension inherent in promoting the past and realizing the future? And can the same tool be used to multiple ends? Theme parks and tourist attractions like them play an important role in this dynamic.

---

[24] "Self-drive holidays popular in China," *Xinhua News* 5 October 2002, 18 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-10/05/content_586037.htm>.

[25] "Self-drive tours popular among holiday makers," *Xinhua News* 8 February 2006, 8 August 2009 <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-02/08/content_4152184.htm>.

THEME PARKS AND BEING "MODERN"

Although the cultural canon of scenic spots and landscapes has changed little for centuries, today the tourist has more choices of destinations and methods of transportation than ever before. In Asia and beyond, theme parks have become increasingly popular tourist destinations; when Disneyland opened a park in Hong Kong in 2006, the government confidently acquired a 57% stake.[26] While a handful of theme parks opened in China in the mid-eighties, by 1998 there were an estimated 2,000 to 2,500.[27] The story goes that the first cultural park in China owes its existence to a miniature culture park in the Netherlands. "In 1985 the then president of China Travel Service visited Madurdam, a small attraction in the Hague which represents the Netherlands in models of famous buildings and landscapes."[28] Inspired by a unique form of the amusement park in which intricate and detailed scale models and an explicit and exotic theme were employed to create a novel environment, he returned with a new entertainment concept. Four years later Splendid China opened its doors in Shenzhen and received 3.1 million visitors in its first year of operation, heralding the beginning of China's theme park surge. Overseas Chinese Town Group, Ltd., the parent company of Splendid China, subsequently opened China Folk Cultures Villages (1991), and Windows of the World (1995) also in the five-square-kilometer area of land that is Overseas Chinese Town in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.[29] All three of these successful ventures employed themes of ethnic, Chinese and world cultural sites and folk customs.

---

[26] Geoffrey A. Fowler and Merissa Marr, "Disney and the Great Wall- Hong Kong's Magic Kingdom Struggles to Attract Chinese Who 'Don't Understand' Park," *The Wall Street Journal* 9 February 2006.
[27] Ap 195.
[28] Greg Richards, "Marketing China overseas: The role of theme parks and tourist attractions," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* Volume 8 Number 1 (2001): 31.
[29] Ap 197.

Nyíri argues that visits to these kinds of parks became a "proto-tourist" activity for many Chinese people.

> It familiarized them with representations of traditional *mingsheng* historically known only to a small literati elite and taught them to see these as parts of a national landscape. The parks also prepared visitors for the experience of traveling to these sites and taught them how to consume the sites when they encountered them.[30]

Collected together in one accessible site, thousands of years of Chinese history and culture were made available to a populace who was just beginning to have the autonomy and means to explore them. Moreover, world culture was packaged in a new, accessible and engaging way. This successful formula would be repeated in ever larger and more elaborately themed leisure spaces, such as the World Park, which begs the question, if visits to scenic spots and folk custom theme parks helped to create a consumable national landscape in the Chinese imaginary, can world parks be used to create a consumable global landscape? Furthermore, through their "modern" reputation, can theme parks satisfy tourists' desire to "be modern?"

Recent studies have shown that while overall leisure time in China is increasing, people's satisfaction with their leisure life is relatively low; among a group polled in 2003, the rate of satisfaction was at a mere 31%.[31] The amount of time in each day that is devoted to work has also fallen, and this combined with a change in views toward recreation means that there is increasing demand for a diversity of leisure activities not directed solely toward relaxation but also toward improving the quality of life, abilities, and developing the self.[32] A Social Survey Institute of China survey of five cities found that 67% of people preferred to visit tourist sites that combined the appeal of natural

[30] Nyíri 15.
[31] Xiangdong Yin, "New Trends of Leisure Consumption in China," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* Volume 26(1) Spring 2005: 176.
[32] Ibid.

scenery with cultural or educational aims.[33] People mean to make their leisure time work for them, not just spending it, but investing it. The emulation of Western models of leisure is a concern not just with modern leisure practices but with *being* modern. In his study of tourism practices in Guizhou province in southwestern China, Tim Oakes argues that the *desire* to "be modern" is a defining characteristic of what it is to *be* modern.

> While the people of Guizhou may not think they have achieved modernity, their desire to "be modern" is in fact an expression of "authentic" modern sensibilities and a recognition of the struggle they find themselves engaged in: how to derive a better, more liberated life from the forces swirling around them.[34]

The concern to be modern is not only a rural one; all over China people are engaged in a self-conscious effort to embody a modern spirit, be a modern citizen, and live a modern life. In their tourism practices too, they demonstrate a preoccupation with what is modern. Not even the ancient scenic sites of the leisure touring canon are exempt; they are being "modernized" with new expanded shopping centers, bathroom facilities, transportation systems and photo opportunities, all in the name of increasing their appeal to tourists. Nyíri notes that the State's direction of tourism has hampered the differentiation in routes and sites; the only thing that can be offered to attract tourists is more "developed," more "modern" destinations.[35] Engaged in the business of business, theme parks are necessarily modern. The only way to generate and maintain ticket sales is to offer the best, newest attractions and constantly develop and rejuvenate facilities.[36] With their emphasis on technological development and unique presentation, theme parks offer tourists a taste of modern life, in its ever-changing novelty.

---

[33] Yin 176.
[34] Tim Oakes, *Tourism and Modernity in China* (London: Routledge, 1998) 7.
[35] Nyíri 75.
[36] Ap 200.

The attractive power of theme parks lies not only in the quality of their services, but also in their theme- the carefully constructed version of reality that they offer. Theming and consistency of theme is a central preoccupation of the industry. Some say Disney has mastered the art; a step inside the park is a trip to a whole other world, with its accompanying homogenizing worldview. A wealth of critical viewpoints have focused on the way theme parks operate in society and on the guests they attract. The Disney parks have received especially harsh treatment, having been transformed from a world of fantastic delights into one of hegemonic horrors. But what of different themes? Can different themes have different effects? To return to a question posed earlier, can a World Park create an impression of a consumable world? In the next chapter the Disneyland experience will be read for its relevance to *The World* and the space of the park will be explored, in the impressions that it generates through its theme and the forms of its physical space.

Chapter 2

Theme Parks and Creating "China" for the World

> Disneyland will be something of a fair, an exhibition, a playground, a community center, a museum of living facts, and a showplace of beauty and magic. It will be filled with the accomplishments, joys, the hopes of the world we live in. And it will remind us and show us how to make those wonders a part of our lives.[37]

As the above quote from Disneyland publicity highlights, theme parks offer more than just entertainment. They aim to amuse, edify, astound and bring people together, all in a setting that provides ample opportunity to spend. In discussing theme parks as a global industry Susan G. Davis points out, "The spatial rationale of the theme park is to cluster commercial opportunities…. Events, architecture and landscaping move people through and past concessions at speeds and intervals that have been carefully determined to enhance sales per capita."[38] But in designing and operating a park, it is not only capitalist aims that are addressed. As discussed earlier, theme parks are also sites in which ideological agendas can be carried out. Space and "theme" play important roles in creating the correct conditions, by subtly using approaches that fool the eye and appease the mind. This chapter will explore the space of two theme parks, the international standard and model, Disneyland, and the World Park created by *Shijie*. Both will be discussed with an eye toward the ideological agendas they express and the means by which they are delivered. In doing so, this chapter will unpack the question of how theme parks are consumed by Chinese tourists and what it is that they are consuming.

---

[37] Sorkin, Michael, "See You in Disneyland," *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, Ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) 206.
[38] Susan G. Davis, "The Theme Park: Global Industry and Cultural Form," *Media, Culture & Society* Volume 18 (1996): 403.

WORLD SHOWCASE, WORLD PARK AND *THE WORLD*

A visit to the World Showcase of Walt Disney World's Epcot Center has a lot in common with a visit to the World Park of *Shijie*. Both bring together diverse elements from cultures around the world and create an "around the world in eighty minutes" experience. However, the World Showcase represents a complete park within a park; using architecture, music, cuisine, and even ethnically appropriate costumed staff, it creates the impression of being transported around the world, with the speed and ability to move between worlds by taking a few steps.[39] Along with the food, kitsch crafts, and Disney memorabilia, the visitor can purchase the dream of world travel, but without the hassle, danger, or loss of time. Here is "synecdoche heaven," an encounter for sale, an example of MacCannell's observation that, "pure experience, which leaves no material trace, is manufactured and sold like a commodity."[40] But the World Showcase, with all its attention to detail, presents a kinder, gentler world, one brought together for the pleasure and convenience of the traveler. The inexperience-traveler visitor is able to read and recognize the familiar and simplified symbols of each culture, and feel that they have experienced something genuine. While exotic and strange, the world and world travel is non-threatening and the message comes across that "the real nations of the world are essentially theme parks- World Showcase pavilions writ large."[41] Its inhabitants, too, are simple people, peaceful and helpful, "quaint people speaking quaint languages, living in old buildings, having nice days."[42]

---

[39] The world-themed park is a prime example of time-space compression as David Harvey describes it (David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996)). Symptomatic of an age where the dimensions and character of time and space are being broken down by technological advancement and movement of capital, these parks exhibit the surreal quality of the present age.
[40] Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schoken Books, 1976) 23.
[41] Fjellman 233.
[42] Ibid.

Critical issues could be raised with the impressions derived from both the World Showcase and World Park experience. In the case of the American theme park, the idea of the world and its cultures as varied but ultimately inferior and reducible, is a mere continuation of the driving ideologies behind the theme parks' predecessors- World's Fairs. Their global cultural villages pioneered the concept of using people as display, equating the process of experiencing other cultures with play and imbuing it with racist, repressive, and superficial overtones.[43] Although Chinese theme parks owe much to their international antecedents, as discussed in Chapter 1, they evolved along different paths. Following the economic reconstruction plans of 1978, domestic tourism began to lose its social and political taboos as token of a bourgeois lifestyle and became more accessible to ordinary Chinese citizens.[44] International travel, too, followed both policy changes and changes in Chinese attitudes toward the outside world. However, despite modernization and China's opening up, the kind of international travel that many American youths enjoy in a summer backpacking around Europe, remains beyond the reach of most Chinese. The State has a vested interest in the power of tourism dollars to develop cities and create jobs, as well as in maintaining the impression of a prosperous and worldly nation, at home and abroad. But the question remains how to maintain that impression when its citizenry cannot enjoy the benefit of world travel. Increased availability and variety of travel opportunities at home are one option to fulfill the need; another is paying attention to the kind of leisure activities tourists enjoy and using them to promote ideas about China's relationship to and place in the world.

---

[43] See Rydell et al. (1993) and Rydell (2000) for in-depth explorations of this claim.

[44] Zhang Guangrui, "China's Tourism Since 1978: Policies, Experiences, and Lessons Learned," *Tourism in China*, Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui (New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003) 15.

As previously discussed, theme parks, like World's Fairs can disguise ideological agendas. The means of accomplishing this task involve space and "theming." Susan G. Davis provides a useful insight on understanding theming:

> Within the industry, the verb "to theme" refers to [a] totalizing effort. Surface stylistic characteristics are highly coordinated in theming but, more importantly, the meanings the park contains are centrally produced and as non-conflictual as possible. The theme park produces the appearance of a rich variety of artifacts, cultures, histories, styles, texts, architectures, and performances, within the framework of overall uniformity of message.[45]

Theme parks are designed to present a united front, seamless, and therefore protected against cracks in its ideological position. In the same article, Davis argues that though the themes may vary, the overarching logic of theme parks is one of capitalist accumulation. It would be difficult to dispute that point as many theme parks around the world are organized around similar plans of flows of people and capital, but one can also argue that it is the theme park's same status as "away" place, "separated from the everyday life of the city by distance as much as by imagistic control," that allows it to operate on multiple levels.[46]

The theme of the World Park may seem obvious- the most famous, or at least recognizable, sights of the world brought together into one place. The park that acts as setting for *Shijie* is actually two parks, the Beijing World Park southwest of the city proper, and the previously mentioned Windows on the World in Shenzhen. The park is divided into different "scenic areas" devoted to Asia, Africa, Europe, the United States and Latin America, and traversed by train and motorboat.[47] Colorfully costumed performers people the park, adding a cultural element to the geographically divorced

---

[45] Davis 403.
[46] Ibid., 404.
[47] J. Hoberman, "J. Hoberman on the films of Jia Zhangke," *The Village Voice* Summer 2005: 308.

architecture. All this describes the scenery of the park, but for a description of its theme, it might be useful to understand the choice of the World Park as the setting for *Shijie.*

Valerie Jaffee points out that Jia's films often portray the characters as eager, perhaps even desperate, to participate in world culture. Their understanding of what that means, however, is hazy and ill defined, and the "world" remains a "vague but powerful term."[48] Whereas in Jia's previous films performance is equated with being conversant with world culture, in *Shijie* world culture is reduced to performance.[49] The promised opportunity and cosmopolitanism of the city is inverted by the exaggerated differentiation of the theme park, while the glitz and costuming conceal the unrealized dreams of the people who work and visit there. This makes the World Park an apt metaphor for what some perceive to be failure amid China's progress:

> Jia's previous films peered behind the façade of the Chinese economic "miracle"; *The World* makes that façade its subject. As metaphor, not to mention documentary backdrop, the film's hyperglobalizing, oppressively ersatz location is almost too powerful.[50]

The film's use of images of global culture is ostensibly excessive; disparate architecture and costume mix in every scene, mimicking the mishmash understanding of the world the park engenders.

In an interview conducted during the 2005 Rotterdam International Film Festival, Jia explains that he wanted the film to highlight the contradictions between the "superficial" modernization of China and the reality of Chinese people's lives. In his opinion, not enough has changed for ordinary people, although they now believe that both China and themselves have modernized. Access to new technologies, cell phones

---

[48] Valerie Jaffee, "Bringing the World to the Nation: Jia Zhangke and the Legitimation of Chinese Underground Film," *Senses of Cinema* May 2004: 8.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Hoberman 308.

and the Internet, have lulled them into a false understanding of what it is to be a part of a modern cosmopolitan society. According to Jia, theme parks like the World Park

> [Give] the impression that the whole world has become a global village. A lot of Chinese people think that way nowadays- they believe that China has become a part of the international community. But it's not really a true reflection of the lives of everyday people in China. A family may be able to visit the world in World Park. But in reality, foreign travel is just a dream.[51]

To some, the park as a world space is not just a visual but social illusion, a surreal space for a surreal time. However, it might be equally true that the "overall uniformity of message" that Davis describes is clear; the World Park espouses the values of modernity, freedom, and cosmopolitanism. It offers the world up to be consumed by a populace hungry for these same values. And it does so in a way that, while it values the beauty and spectacle of their forms, devalues their size and therefore stature. The park welcomes its visitors to the world, but it is a stripped, economically and politically neutral one. In its space, China and its people stand among the people of the world, equal in their consumption of world space. Yet does this constitute an attempt at creating a modern Chinese vision of global space? Could the amusing, if critically nightmarish, theme park represent a precursor to Beijing's 2008 Olympic Village? Another aspect of this effort is China's redefinition of its past and future to a world audience. At the same time that China is attempting to create the world at home, it is also attempting to create China abroad, and once again, a page has been taken from Disney's book. A look at how theme parks have informed the theming and branding of China for international consumption will inform a later discussion of global space as represented by the Olympic Village.

---

[51] Richard James Havis, "Illusory Worlds: An Interview with Jia Zhangke," *CINEASTE* Fall 2005: 58-59.

CHINA® AT HOME AND ABROAD

Although Chinese theme parks owe a lot to their Western counterparts in terms of planning, operating models and marketing strategies, they differ greatly in their chosen themes. Apart from the similarities between World Showcase and various world-themed parks, there is little in common between the content and characters of the Disney parks and Chinese theme parks.[52] The first Disney park was created as a vehicle for Disney-branded characters and merchandise.[53] It utilized fantastic settings and characters taken from Western children's stories and its own cartoons to create an idealized America full of heroes and adventure. As Disney expands its market abroad and continues to build new parks, changes to the original formula have had to be made. In 2006, Disney had to "teach" Hong Kong visitors how to enjoy the park by distributing literature at the door on why the park was enjoyable and by welcoming tour groups and guides. "Part of the way we make people happy is that we listen, learn and adjust as necessary," said Jay Rasulo, head of Disney's theme-park division.[54] Some attempts to accommodate Chinese culture have been more successful than others. Disney received heavy criticism for serving shark's fin soup in its on-site restaurants and pulled the practice thereafter.[55] Executives also came under fire when after designing the park "with Chinese tourists in mind," they

---

[52] Excluding obvious cases of copyright infringement of Disney characters and products, that is. The theme of Shijingshan Amusement Park in Beijing is daringly close to that of the Magic Kingdom, so close that they explicitly reference it in their slogan, "Disneyland is too far, so please come to Shijingshan!" (Dan Martin, "Fakes a real fact of life in China's heated economy," *The Standard* 11 April 2007. 1 October 2009 <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=20&art_id=41990&sid=13078355&con_type=1&d_str=20070411>.)

[53] Often credited as the originator of a new form of cross-medium promotion and branding, Walt Disney turned an already successful cartoon movie studio and its characters into the basis of an amusement park. In addition, in the period prior to the park's opening, Disney created the television program "Disneyland" for the ABC television network, an arrangement that both generated capital to fund the park and later promoted it. See Alan Bryman, *Disney and His Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995) 12.

[54] Fowler and Marr 2006.

[55] This expensive dish is considered a delicacy in Chinese culture. However, it remains controversial due to the fact that once removed, it is difficult to determine from what species of shark the fins came. Purveyors of shark fins are often accused of over-fishing and fishing endangered species of sharks.

created more photo opportunities and built fewer roller coasters, leading guests to complain that the park was too small.[56] The changes must have proved successful, however. In 2009 the Hong Kong government announced plans to expand the park to include three new themed areas, "Grizzly Trail," "Mystic Point," and "Toy Story Land" over the next five years.[57] As of August 2009, plans for a Shanghai Disneyland had yet to be approved by the central government.[58]

Accompanying the growth of foreign theme parks and theme park investment has been a push for China's indigenous theme parks to "capitalize on traditional culture" by building parks that address the heritage and interests of the Chinese people.[59] Although it remains at the present time unrealistic to try to compete with Disneyland, which has a long, successful history and huge amounts of capital, Chinese theme parks are urged to "[link] the entertainment industry with our rich cultural resources" to develop their market.[60] Four years after Splendid China in Shenzhen opened its doors, China Travel Service sought to do just that and opened another park in Orlando, Florida. Costing an estimated $100 million and located just across the highway from Disney World, Splendid China Florida, like its predecessor, contained sixty $1/10^{th}$ scale replicas of the great architectural sites of China.[61] Initially the exquisitely crafted miniatures and manicured gardens were the only attractions, however, low ticket sales eventually led to the addition of song and dance shows and handicrafts displays. Unfortunately, the park was never able

---

[56] Fowler and Marr 2006.
[57] "HK gov't announces expansion plan for Disneyland," *Xinhua News* 30 June 2009, 15 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/30/content_11627828.htm>.
[58] "Disney yet to get nod for park in Shanghai," *China Daily* 10 August 2009, 25 August 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-08/10/content_8547128.htm>.
[59] " Can China's homemade theme park overtake Disney Land?" *Xinhua News* 24 March 2009, 15 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/24/content_11062115.htm>.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Jack Snyder, "S. Florida developers buy Splendid China site," *The Orlando Sentinel* 27 May 2006.

to compete with its famous neighbor and an American audience used to passive entertainment, and closed its doors in 2003.[62] Regarding the problems inherent in marketing China overseas, Greg Richards notes that success lies with the degree of familiarity of visitors with Chinese "markers," the images used to create "China" abroad. Difficulty lies in choosing markers which both appeal to visitors and overcome the simplification of images that comes with distance.[63] China's image is one of distance, both cultural and physical, an image that the less adventurous (read majority) of visitors find unappealing.[64] In choosing its markers, Splendid China Florida relied on the successful formula of Splendid China Shenzhen. But it also utilized a similar logic to that of world parks: the whole of China, past and future glory, could be experienced via the visual consumption of its miniatures. The ideological project of representing China to itself and the world to China had the opposite effect in representing China to the world, leading some to decry the park as a propagandist whitewashing of China's history and internal relations.[65] In this unsuccessful attempt to define its brand to an international audience, "China" meant a glorious exotic past represented through detailed craftsmanship and ostensibly "cultural" performances. As we shall see, future attempts would find their focus in a modern, future-oriented and prosperous China.

SPACE AND SIMULATION IN THE WORLD PARK

A discussion of the space of theme parks, especially the World Park, cannot ignore the apparent associations with simulation and simulacra. Sorkin notes how like a theme park the city is becoming; a negative process because it serves to conceal the

---

[62] Snyder 2006.
[63] Richards 30.
[64] Ibid., 29.
[65] Kenneth R. Timmerman, "Florida Splendid China," *American Spectator* February 1999, 28 September 2009 <http://caccp.freedomsherald.org/mc/prpc1999.pdf>.

manipulation, dissipation, and artifice now inherent in communal city life.[66] Yet the process seems to be welcomed much like people who are ignorant of the implications, persist in enjoying their visits to Disneyland.

> Getting there, then, is not half the fun: it's all the fun. At Disneyland one is constantly poised in a condition of becoming, always someplace that is "like" someplace else. The simulation's referent is ever elsewhere; the "authenticity" of the substitution always depends on the knowledge, however faded, of some absent genuine…. The whole system is validated, though, by the fact that one had literally traveled, that one has, after all, chosen to go to Disneyland in lieu of any of the actual geographies represented. One has gone nowhere in spite of the equivalent ease of going somewhere. One has preferred the simulation to the reality. For millions of visitors, Disneyland is just like the world, only better.[67]

The simulation offers something real. It is embraced and efficacious and as such can be more than an equal trade off for the "real" thing. In the World Park of *Shijie*, one prefers the simulation to the reality because the simulation is all there is. As Baudrillard suggests, the simulation saves us from the realization that "the real is no longer real, and thus [saves] the reality principle."[68] The world inside a park is no less real than the world outside for being there; its singularity helps to disguise the fact that even if one was able, there would be no real "world" out there to find. For instance, if one could go see the "real" Eiffel Tower represented in miniature in World Park, one would discover that "the Tower is *nothing*, it achieves a kind of zero degree of the monument; it participates in no rite, in no cult, not even in Art; you cannot visit the Tower as a museum; there is nothing to see *inside* [it]."[69] Its appeal is its falsehood, which acts as a conduit in achieving closeness with something entirely unreachable. A visit to the Eiffel Tower in Paris and

---

[66] Michael Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park," *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, Ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) xv.
[67] Sorkin 216.
[68] Jean Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) 172.
[69] Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979) 7.

the Eiffel Tower in Beijing are in some ways wholly different, but also the same in that visitors, aware of the simulation, go anyway, "in order to participate in a dream of which it is [much] more the crystallizer that the true object."[70] The dream of *The World* is the world; its towers and monuments stand in as poignant reminders of their own absence.

The use value, relevance, and even original meaning of the Eiffel Tower have long been lost. What remains is a sign. The Eiffel Tower in World Park is a sign of that sign, another "generation by [a model] of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."[71] In a time characterized by the "growing confusion and fusion of the realandimagined" people lack the means to differentiate false from real.[72] Moreover, "Virtually all reality is now realistically simulated;" more real than the real thing, it has become hyperreal.[73] In using the term "hyperreal," Baudrillard shifts his discussion from that of semiotics to the "real" space of Disneyland.

> Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of California and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation. It is no longer a question of false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real.[74]

In his eyes, the ultimate theme park and the ultimate theme park of a country have conspired to conceal the illusion of control over reality and meaning. Umberto Eco, too, uses the term hyperreality to refer to Disneyland. There, "Everything looks real, and therefore it is real; in any case the fact that it seems real is real."[75] The simulated world of the theme park, more real than the real thing, is able to create experiences that could

---

[70] Barthes 7.
[71] Baudrillard 166.
[72] Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000) 325.
[73] Ibid., 327.
[74] Baudrillard 172.
[75] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986) 16.

otherwise never be had. While the structures, personnel, rides, and merchandise in the park are real, "What is falsified is our will" to believe, and our understanding of the purpose of the theme park.[76] In the World Park of *Shijie*, where the hyperreal nature of the theme park conceals modern Chinese reality, a day-trip to the park that promises, "Give us a day and we'll give you the world!" actually delivers.

As employees who work in and live next to the World Park, *Shijie*'s main characters' experience of the park is amplified. Real and simulation take on new meaning in a place whose only attractions are replicas of famous world sites. But it is precisely their status as copies, elaborate simulations of the real thing, that lend credence to the park's assertion that it is cosmopolitan in its inclinations and modern in its abilities. "Only in China could you see such amazing copies!" As mentioned earlier, the same logic did not prove successful for Splendid China Florida. It seemed that China's strategy of branding itself did not match up with the image held by its international audience. While able to utilize the hyperreal space of theme parks to give Chinese tourists "vicarious impressions" of a legible, consumable global space, it remains to be seen how successful that effort has been.

Throughout the film, the character Tao plays many roles; she and the other inhabitants of the park navigate the surreal landscape with knowledge and nonchalance. A consideration of their attitudes and origins will be useful in understanding the human element in China's project of creating global space. For an affluent few, a visit to a theme park is just that, an amusing dalliance. For the majority of Chinese people, it represents much more. The fact that *Shijie* focuses on migrant workers in Beijing rather than middle-class tourists at the World Park speaks to the significance of the role they play in

[76] Eco 43.

China's development. As the Chinese people who actually inhabit *The World*, theirs is a unique insight and experience. They represent not only the raw materials out of which China hopes to fashion its progress and modernization, but also the potential finished product. The next chapter will examine the driving force behind *The World*, its characters, in order to answer the question "Who are the inhabitants of China's new global space?"

Chapter 3

Debunking the Myths of Progress: The People Behind *The World*

The sheer scale of economic and social changes that China has undergone in the past thirty years distract from the underlying human cost of its modernizing project. Underneath every new skyscraper, top-of-the-line item, and globally-oriented cultural product lay the masses of people who make progress possible. Mostly rural and peasant in origin, their labor drives China's economic development, while their dreams and ambitions fuel the fires of modernization and globalization. Their experiences have been the subject of several of Jia Zhangke's previous films; their lives exemplify the minor triumphs and major pitfalls of rapid social and cultural changes in China. In *Shijie*, Jia once again returns to the subject of China's "every(wo)man," this time utilizing the World Park as an overt metaphor for the experience of globalization for the majority of Chinese people. His characterizations of the men and women who live and work in the park, and their relationships to it and each other, display both condemnation of the sham cosmopolitanism to which they are subject and an ambivalent attitude toward their ability as rural subjects to negotiate the multifaceted demands of city. This chapter will explore the characters in *The World* and the roles they play as representatives of China's global citizenry as well as discuss Jia's stance on their success and failures in this endeavor. In particular, the characters of Tao, Taisheng, Anna and Little Sister will be discussed in terms of their ability to perform the roles set out for them in China's struggle to remake its global image. Caught in the maelstrom of progress and torn between the shifting fields of urban and rural, male and female, global and local, these characters best illustrate the changing face of China.

MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE CITY

Although accurate numbers are notoriously hard to come by, the general consensus finds the population of rural migrant workers, or the "floating population," in China's cities to be between 100-150 million.[77] In the 1990s, women comprised between one-half and one-third the total migrant population; among them, women aged under thirty numbered 83%, compared to just 53% among the male population.[78] Although individual reasons for migration among young rural women vary, central among them is the opportunity to see the world and gain new experiences beyond the village and earn money and independence through work.[79] Dorothy Solinger identifies both push/pull and social network forces as factors for migration.[80] Rural men and women who chose migration are faced with the reality of land scarcity, lack of income beyond subsistence, and a resulting surplus of labor.[81] In addition, still prevalent in many areas is the idea that women are a drain to household resources because they will ultimately leave and become part of their husband's household. Because there is less expectation that they will be a source of support for their parents, they are often encouraged to quit school early and find work away from home.

The *hukou* system remains a major barrier for most migrant workers, and that, combined with low educational levels and a socially accepted and media perpetuated bias against the floating population mean that most are able to find work only in the low-

---

[77] Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka, "Introduction: Focusing on Migrant Women," *On the Move: Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China*, Eds. Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 1.

[78] Ibid., 23.

[79] Other reasons include to escape the hardships of farm work, pressure to marry early a person not of their own choosing, increase access to educational opportunities, and accumulate status and wealth through work or urban marriage. See Gaetano and Jacka (2004) for an in-depth exploration of migrant women's motivations and outcomes.

[80] Dorothy Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 151.

[81] Ibid., 154.

paying, labor intensive jobs that urban workers reject. Migrant workers predominate in six main trades: construction, manufacturing, nurse-maiding, marketing and services, cottage-style garment processing, and begging and scrap collecting.[82] Urban companies employ migrant workers because they may pay them lower wages than urban workers, do not have to pay insurance for them, save money by providing cheap and crowded housing, and are not required to establish schools for the benefit of their children.[83] Women are subject to additional discrimination; most companies require that they be single, childless and young. Because women are thought to have nimble fingers and timid temperaments, they are a favorite of coastal factories, who exploit their labor with mandatory overtime, low wages, and dangerous working conditions. As a result, many young women relinquish the harsh conditions of the factory floor for the seductive glamour and questionable status of a karaoke bar hostess[84] or another type of sex worker, a topic that will be returned to later.

Into this setting is placed Zhao Xiaotao, a dancer and performer at the Beijing World Park of *Shijie*. At the film's start, we encounter Tao as a young woman, settled in her position as a park performer, capably negotiating the spaces of the World Park and eager to marry her boyfriend Taisheng. In the course of the film we are made to realize that it is precisely Tao's ease in the park that limits her opportunities in the world. Hers is a false knowledge of the world, brought on by her subjugated position as a rural woman in an urban setting. Having come to Beijing, as so many others, to see and experience the world, Tao has resigned herself to the World Park, a move that ultimately leads to her

[82] Solinger 206.
[83] Ibid., 218.
[84] Paid to accompany customers in private karaoke rooms, karaoke hostesses sing songs, dance, and encourage customers to purchase food and drinks from the bar. Because they work for tips, many hostesses fall into prostitution as a means to increase their income. See Zheng (2009) for an expanded discussion.

demise.[85] Tao's status as a migrant worker, rural woman, and employee at World Park means that she best embodies Jia's real Chinese "global citizen;" that is, although she has bought into the dream and works hard to realize her ambitions, in reality, her journey to the city, and *The World,* has brought her no closer to the world. Two instances particularly highlight the contradictions inherent in Tao's imagined world and her reality- the recurring theme of air travel and Tao's friendship with the Russian dancer, Anna.

FLYING HIGH: IMAGINING COSMOPOLITANISM

How the air travel industry is portrayed in *Shijie* exemplifies its perception in modern-day China. Its best-known representatives, flight attendants, are carefree, young and beautiful; the world is their proverbial oyster. At the same time, they contrast greatly with the "unfortunate social stratum," migrant workers, that Jia wished to be the subjects of this film.[86] Their lives are full of struggle, monotony and drudgery. The recurring theme of flight and flight attendants is intended as contrast to the situation of the main characters. Envied and mimicked because they have supposedly realized the promises of freedom and modernity, flight attendants are a potent symbol in *Shijie* and beyond. The mechanism by which it operates is through costuming, specifically the ubiquitous and recognizable uniform, and performance. By aligning themselves with and drawing on the powerful symbol of the flight attendant, young Chinese women are performing a culturally relevant and legible self, one of limitless freedom and possibilities.

It is not only in China, but also in many Asian countries that the craze for a career in the airline industry has taken hold. Much as American women in the early twentieth century considered the opportunities for a credible career and personal freedom plentiful

[85] A demise that Arianne Gaetano argues is meant by Jia to suggest the incompatibility of the rural woman with Chinese modernity (Gaetano 2009).
[86] Alice Shih, "Jia Zhangke: Life and Times Beyond the World," *CineAction* 53:6 Winter 2006: 68.

in the airline industry, Asian women today are coming to similar conclusions.[87] Obviously there are as many reasons for desiring this career as there are women who attempt to obtain it, however, there exist particular trends in perceptions and representations of flight attendants. The restrictions and qualifications of the airline companies are the main contributors to these images. For the most part, they require that flight attendants be young, petite,[88] well groomed, and "know how to meet passengers with sweet, hospitable smiles."[89] The images of flight attendants are homogeneous- lovely, young, hospitable, smartly dressed- and widespread. And despite the actual working conditions of the airline industry- the long hours, unruly passengers, few opportunities for advancement, stress, and forced retirement- the air of superiority attached to it persists.[90]

In countries where women are still in many ways not equal to men, the airline industry appears to be an avenue by which a young woman can make her own way, and work in an environment dictated less by the sexist demands of the corporate world than by her own ability and ambition. In Japan, where cultural, historic and economic differences with China are too great to afford a perfect analogy, it is surprising how alike women's enthusiasm for a career as flight attendant remain:

> "Becoming a stewardess is like being awarded a medal," says Takiko Nakano, editor in chief of Air Stage, a glossy magazine that caters to would-be flight

---

[87] Johanna Omelia and Michael Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess* (Portland: Collectors Press, 2006).

[88] Flight attendants must be at least 18 and at most late 20s to early 30s, and 5 feet 2 inches and up. See David McMahon, "Life and times of a high-flyer," *The Standard* 28 October 2002, 8 September 2006 <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/archive_news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=23646&sid=&con_type=1&archive_d_str=20021028>.

[89] "Hostess candidates denied due to poor smiles," *China Daily* 29 August 2006, 9 September 2006 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-08/29/content_676460.htm>.

[90] Su-Chiun Liang and An-Tien Hsieh, "Individual's Perception of Career Development and Job Burnout Among Flight Attendants in Taiwan," *The International Journal of Aviation Psychology* 15:2 (2005): 119.

> attendants…. "Some of the girls are wasting their abilities," Nakano says. "But there are very few opportunities for women to use their talents in Japan."[91]

The fact that women face additional hardships and limitations in modern society likely also contributes to the appeal of a career that promises the possibility of international travel. Not only can one escape the rat race of the business world, but can see the world and get paid for it. Despite the fact that most Chinese flight attendants will only be able to fly internationally after ten or more years, the perception of freedom of movement remains a huge draw.[92]

In a place and time where it is easy to realize the possibilities of international travel, as in the West, the appeal of the image of the jet-setting, globetrotting flight attendant has waned. Wage cuts and the relative low cost and increased frequency of international travel among people in all sectors of society have combined to reduce the status of professions in the airline industry.[93] In China, however, it is only now beginning to become accessible to common people; in *Shijie*, Tao tells Little Sister "I have never met anyone who has been on a plane."[94] The illusion of freedom through travel still attached to the flight attendant is one of a self without boundaries (the restrictions on daily life in present-day China) that has limitless potential for movement (travel), growth (career advancement), and therefore happiness (including the myth of romance in the

---

[91] Reynolds, Isabel. "Heads in the Clouds." *The Standard* online. 4 September 2002. 24 October 2006 <http://thestandard.com.hk/archive_news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=20486&sid=&con_type=1&archive_d_str=20020904>.

[92] Howard W. French, "Bedlam in the air for China flight attendants," *The New York Times* 11 January 2005: 12.

[93] The perceived prestige of a career as a flight attendant reached its peak in the United States in the 1960s. After that point, airline deregulation combined with the evolution of air travel from uncommon occurrence to frequent hassle, effected a change in the role and status of flight attendants (Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 91). The impression that flight attendants have few skills and no fixed abode (similar to images that plague female migrant workers- see Sun 2004: 109-128) has resulted in a widespread acceptance of such putdowns as "space waitress" and "air mattress."

[94] *Shijie (The World),* Dir. Jia Zhangke, 2004, DVD, Zeitgeist Films, 2006.

skies with the wealthy, lonely businessman), and one of the principle means by which it is accomplished in the film is through costuming.

One attraction at World Park is a grounded jet plane. The prerecorded message plays in both Chinese and English over the loudspeaker.

> "Welcome to flight 154. Before landing in our park, this plane made international flights. We have preserved its original appearance. The hostesses are all performers of the Five Continents Company. Everything is for you to experience the beauty of air travel."[95]

As the performer assigned to the plane that day, Tao was dressed in a recognizable and oft coveted flight attendant uniform. Throughout the film, Tao wears many costumes; it seems that her role as a performer in the park is closely related to dress. In this instance, in order to play the part of the airline hostess, she must simply put on the uniform. The uniform has become the most potent and recognizable symbol of the airline hostess' occupation and freedom. So desirous are some women of acquiring for themselves this outward appearance, the trappings of the job and what it represents that even those who are not planning a career in the airline industry sometimes pay for the opportunity to experience the lifestyle.[96]

In a place where Chinese people come to see things they might never otherwise have the opportunity to see, where the most famous and recognizable sites of the world are offered up in miniature for casual consumption, appearances are everything. In director Jia Zhangke's words:

> "World Park" is a strange place. We entered and were transported in an instant to the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Rome or Manhattan, but in fact it was only an illusion, further removed from reality. It was sending mixed messages, and it was

---

[95] *Shijie* 2004.

[96] In Japan, "AL's popular 'Manner Lesson' tours allow women to experience parts of a flight attendant's training, including serving meals, making in-flight announcements, advice on table manners and the chance to dress up in that all-important uniform" (Reynolds 2002).

> hard to express the melancholy merely with words. As research, I often went to observe the visitors. I saw families from small towns having fun and enjoying themselves, but I felt a deep sorrow instead, knowing that was how fellow Chinese try to encounter the world.[97]

The park is about illusions, but ones that are decipherable and pleasurable for its visitors. The performers, along with the architecture of the buildings, accomplish the illusion through their dress. It seems, however, that they are not unaware of the connection between looking and being. The film contrasts the beauty and orderliness of the elaborate stage shows, and the hustle and bustle of backstage camaraderie when the costumed performers are each playing someone else, with the drab surroundings of the performers' living quarters and how gray and depressed life is otherwise- when everyone must be him/herself.

For Tao, it appears that this type of superficial self-definition and presentation has fluctuating appeal. Just like the grounded plane, devoid of passengers and purpose, is an empty shell, so too is Tao in a flight attendant's costume, without any of its attendant benefits or prestige, freedom or possibilities. She says as much to her boyfriend Taisheng when she asks him to take her away from there, "Being stuck in here all day will turn me into a ghost"- an illusion, a specter, form without content. Just as the theme park relies upon simulation and illusion to create a hyperreal experience, *The World*'s characters, too, rely on costuming to perform their freer selves.[98] In the case of the flight attendant, that appearance is intended to be one of a beautiful, free and cosmopolitan social actor.

Perhaps more than anything else, the flight attendant has become a symbol of Asian progress toward a "global" standard. With her ability to speak multiple languages, multiculturally acceptable good looks, and travel experience, the flight attendant tangibly

---

[97] Shih 2006.

[98] There is a marked contrast in Taisheng's behavior when he is in and out of his security guard uniform. Only when he has shed its drab, quasi-military appearance and donned his slick leather jacket does he begin to operate as his big city self, an extralegal wheeler and dealer.

represents the effects of globalization. But she is just one obvious example of a larger trend. In a 1994 article, Louisa Schein writes about the beginnings of a turn away from a nationalist Chinese self-definition, in terms of Chinese and non-Chinese, and toward "supranational identifications."[99] She uses the term "imagined cosmopolitanism" to describe this process:

> It would be simplistic to say that Chinese had become more Westernized than they used to be; rather, the identities they were forging were decreasingly structured by an internal Chineseness versus an external foreignness. The Chinese were fashioning themselves more and more as participants in a global culture of late capitalist consumption. This process of identity redistribution, dense with local practices and cultural production, could be described as "imagined cosmopolitanism."[100]

Part of this "imagined cosmopolitanism" involves the consumption of globally produced products, but it also entails the consumption of images. Chinese men and women have long been consuming images of Western women. White women often appear as "wholesome figures of self-possessed independence," everywhere recognizable by their white skin, golden hair, and familiar costuming.[101] However, two of the effects of "imagined cosmopolitanism," that "(1) Western culture is no longer a distant object of tabooed longing [and] (2) the place of the [modern] Western woman is no longer so circumscribed, but can be occupied by Chinese women as well" have meant that Chinese women have more and more themselves become objects for consumption and the carefree, confident, young and beautiful flight attendant has assumed some of the symbolic potency that images of white women once had.[102]

---

[99] Louisa Schein, "The Consumption of Color and the Politics of White Skin in Post-Mao China" *Social Text* Number 41 Winter 1994: 142.
[100] Ibid., 149.
[101] Ibid., 144.
[102] Ibid., 152.

The cultural weight attached to the symbol of the flight attendant as modern, free, and cosmopolitan continues to overshadow the real circumstances of this lifestyle. The flight attendant's life is still not one of ease and world travel. In fact today, with new regulations, longer hours, and unruly first time passengers, it might be harder than ever before.[103] But its symbolic power is enduring and has much to do with appearances and performance. Young women want to emulate them in dress and manners because doing that alone is enough to bring upon oneself the whole host of accompanying symbols. And this remains important, perhaps becomes more so, because despite all of the progress of the past several decades, Chinese women are still not able to move about the world and travel freely. Ultimately this appears to be the lesson of *The World*-until people can be free to travel, to live, to see, to do, they will make do with reproductions, facsimiles, and appearances, and the world they can see in a day at World Park will be their only world.

THE OTHER HALF: HUMAN CONSEQUENCES OF DEVELOPMENT

The aura of the opportunity for travel and freedom is not limited only to flight attendants, but to anyone with the money, education, or the fabled passport to access it. Shortly following her arrival, Tao forges a connection with Anna, a Russian performer new to the park.[104] Even though they are strangers and do not speak the same language, both women seem to sympathize with and envy the other. Anna because Tao seems on the surface so untroubled and settled in her life, Tao because Anna has a passport, can travel out of the country, and is therefore "free." In reality, the circumstances of both

[103] French 2005.

[104] Jia's choice to include a Russian performer as the foil to Tao's imagined cosmopolitanism could be read as another example of consumption of the image of a Western woman. In a 2005 interview, however, Jia said that his choice was based on the similar circumstances, past and present, of people in Russia and China; "I think that we have characteristics in common; although China is evolving slowly, we experienced the same ideology" (in Patricia R.S. Batto, "The World of Jia Zhangke," *China Perspectives* Number 60 (2005) <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/document2843.html>.)

women are basically the same; they are restricted by government, finances and status. Yet, while Tao is a young, unmarried woman, and therefore unburdened by family and spouse, Anna has children, a spouse, and a sister for whom she must take responsibility. Her supposed freedom is restricted both by these obligations and physically by her status as a hired immigrant worker; she is seen handing over her passport under duress upon arrival at World Park. She later tells Tao that in order to fulfill her commitments she must take a new job, one that she hates. Later Tao discovers that Anna has taken a job as a karaoke hostess and realizes how bounded she really is.

The opening up of the market and the subsequent emergence of a Chinese nouveau riche have been accompanied by the growth and popularity of entertainment venues such as karaoke bars. Their Western technology, flashy neon lights, and rich interiors and exteriors all serve to make them sites not only of "modern" consumption, but also of commercial activity. Today, business deals and *guanxi*[105] networks are solidified in the midst of song, dance, alcohol, and the company of karaoke hostesses. Along with hair salons, massage parlors and bathhouses, karaoke bars have also become a major site of sexual consumption in China. Apart from the obvious lure of sexual pleasure, Tiantian Zheng writes that hostesses act as a foil against which Chinese men can measure their progress and prowess.

> Clients [of karaoke hostesses] conceived of their sex consumption as the embrace of a Western-oriented model of modernity and a rejection of artificial restraints imposed by a puritanical Confucian-Socialist system…. Clients' "consumption" of hostesses becomes the criterion by which clients evaluate each other's moral quality and business competence in Chinese state clientelism.[106]

---

[105] A central concept in Chinese society is *guanxi*, an individual's personal network of connections and relationships maintained through reciprocal obligation and favors. The term applies more often to non-familial relationships, such as those forged through business transactions.

[106] Tiantian Zheng, *Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Postsocialist China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 106.

Not only is this type of sex consumption natural, that is, biologically determined,[107] but it is also a valid means of demonstrating one's spending power, and therefore manhood, among peers.[108] The majority of those being consumed are not dissimilar to Tao and Anna, young rural women who came to the city looking for work.[109] After finding only low-paying, low status, and dangerous jobs available to them, some turn to karaoke hostessing as a means to make more money in less time. Not all karaoke hostesses engage in sexual services, and not all other female migrants workers eschew them. When making money appears to be the only way to access modernity, the lines of morality and economy become blurry, a fact that Tao discovers when she accompanies her co-worker Qiu to a party at a karaoke bar.

It turns out the "party" that she has been invited to is actually to accompany several wealthy businessmen to a karaoke bar. One of them clumsily attempts to coax Tao out of the club with the promise of perfume, jewelry, clothing, all "things that a woman needs" and a passport that for him "is easy to get." Visibly shaken, Tao takes refuge in the ladies' room, where she runs into Anna, transformed by her eveningwear and makeup into a karaoke hostess. At that moment, as Anna attempts some explanation for her circumstances, but can find none, Tao realizes that the situation she just avoided and the one her friend is, even if reluctantly engaged in, are the same. The tears they shed are for themselves and each other, and for all they have had to and will have to endure.

---

[107] Zheng notes, "For Chinese men, biology is the ultimate explanation and justification for all violence against women. [The intellectual discourse of the Republican era] replaced the cosmological yin-yang discourse with biological determinism and modern Western science as scientific proof of gender hierarchy" (19).

[108] Li Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China's Floating Population* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) 125.

[109] "By 2000 the Chinese Public Security office estimated 4-6 million sex workers nationwide, a 160-fold increase since 1985. A 2001 U.S. State Department report on China estimated the number of sex workers at 10 million" (in Joseph D. Tucker, et al., "Surplus Men, Sex Work, and the Spread of HIV in China," *AIDS* Volume 19 Issue 6, 8 April 2005: 542). Most reports agree the majority of these are rural women.

Here the contrast between the possibility of freedom and the ability to realize it, and how far a person might go to do so is made most evident. Bringing together these two characters in this setting, a rural woman and a Russian woman, a once resolute virgin and a reluctant whore, both immigrants in an unforgiving city, Jia paints a portrait of the real lives and experiences of an oft-disparaged and ignored category of women in China today. The illusion of modernity and freedom that Tao creates for herself on a daily basis through her performance in the park is mirrored in Anna's drastically changed appearance as she too changes costumes to create a new identity.[110]

Rural men, too, looking for prosperity and opportunity, are making their way to China's cities. Taisheng followed his girlfriend Tao to Beijing and also works in World Park as a security guard. Yet it seems that as Tao's social reality is changing for the worse, Taisheng's prospects are only getting better. Coming from the more traditional countryside, Tao is expected to marry at a young age, have a child and become an obedient member of her husband's household. The longer she stays in the city, the harder it will become to settle down, as she ages out of both the job market and the marriage market.[111] Spatially, she is confined to the endless repetitive circuit around the park and between its attractions, and to her dank, cramped living quarters. Taisheng, however, has a car and therefore access to the outside world. He uses his increased mobility to begin courting a successful long-term migrant, Qun, and even introduces extended family members from his hometown to work in the city. Fresh off the bus from the countryside, his cousin Little Sister marvels at the monuments of the park, as Taisheng acts as

[110] Jia's show of Anna's successful flight to Ulan Bator suggests his ambivalent attitude toward Tao's traditional moralism. Although Anna transgressed its boundaries, she unlike Tao, was ultimately able to realize her dream.
[111] Gaetano and Jacka 144.

experienced tour guide, competently explaining them. Little Sister's wonder is short-lived however, as he is fatally injured in a construction accident.

Jia's treatment of the characters of Taisheng and Little Sister illustrate the different motives held and pressures faced by rural men in the city. While he ostensibly came to the city to both look for work and be with Tao, Taisheng is resistant to the idea of marriage. It seems his pleas for her trust and confidence are only designed to acquire her virginity, "a valuable possession" for a rural girl and the last remaining stronghold of her traditional mindset.[112] Meanwhile he has no qualms carrying on a relationship with another woman, proving that he too has changed in the city.[113]

Little Sister is in Beijing but a short time before his fate becomes that of many migrant workers in the city. Migrant labor is notoriously gender selective; a study in Beijing in the late 1980s found that 95% of domestic workers were women, while over 91% of construction workers were men.[114] Though it is bitter and tiring work, construction is appealing to many migrant workers because it demands little initial investment and low skill levels.[115] In efforts to cut costs and complete projects quickly, companies often demand that workers cut corners and work mandatory overtime. The arbitrary work hours combined with an untrained workforce in unsafe conditions mean that accidents and injuries are common.[116] Like many workers who are forced to sign "safety contracts" that indemnify the company in the event of an accident, Little Sister's parents are offered a small lump sum in exchange for their agreement not to pursue the

---

[112] Arianne Gaetano, "Rural Women and Modernity in Globalizing China: Seeing Jia Zhangke's *The World*," *Visual Anthropology Review* Volume 25 Number 1 Spring 2009: 31.
[113] Taisheng's shady side dealings and his commodification of his relationship with Tao, demonstrate that he has bought into the logic of the market; just like everyone else, he is looking for the "BBD," the bigger, better deal.
[114] Solinger 243.
[115] Ibid., 207.
[116] Ibid., 213.

matter further. Another victim of the city thrown under the wheels of progress by the drive for development, Little Sister represents the faceless masses toiling to build the China of tomorrow. His innocent and sweet nature highlights the inequity inherent in the system that draws migrants to cities, exploiting their labor and denying their personhood. Under the spell of modernization, Little Sister and Taisheng, as well as Tao and Anna, all came to confuse their own dreams with those of the nation. *Shijie* depicts each character's painful adaptation to the true nature of urban life for a rural person. Swapping loyalties and morals like costumes in order to keep the dream alive, each ultimately found that the "imagined cosmopolitanism" that promised them participation in world culture could not deliver.

While the urban community has become ever more dependent on the services and goods that they provide, the competition (whether real or perceived) for limited city resources in addition to the negative portrayals by the media of the migrant population as the seat and source of crime and vice, have all made unwanted intruders of the floating population. Little effort is expended to understand and address the causes for such large-scale migration or alleviate the harsh and dangerous conditions in which migrants live in the city. Taking up the cause of the "ordinary person," Jia transforms the exuberant and impressive space of a theme park into the oppressive and limiting site where the lives of his characters play out. Although *Shijie* can be read as a condemnation of the failure of China's modernization project, it appears Jia is also critical of the same people whose cause he champions. Were it not for their stubborn clinging to traditional (read 落後) concepts and gender roles, and buying into the limitations of their status, they might be able to realize the affluence and opportunities of their urban counterparts. Women fare particularly poorly in this reading; Gaetano reads both Tao and Anna's apparent embrace

of their situations as a lack of agency, one that ultimately does not bode well for Chinese women or the Chinese nation.

> Tao symbolizes a nation that has naïve expectations of modernity and has been heretofore uncritical of globalization. Through her, Jia issues the clarion call to his compatriots to "wake up" to reality and "to heal" the nation.[117]

Through his previous films, Jia Zhangke has created an alternate image of the new citizenship of China, that is, real people living in the real conditions of a country undergoing dramatic economic and social changes. Eschewing the extremes of miracle success stories and exposé depictions of the underbelly of modernizing China, Jia's community is multifaceted. They are hard working and extralegal, loyal and subject to vice; they are the majority of the population in some cities and yet excluded from the benefits of citizenship. In *Shijie*, the representation is further complicated by its origins. As Jia's first film working in cooperation with the Shanghai Film Studio, it represents a turnabout for both Jia as an independent filmmaker and the Chinese government as arbiter of cultural production. Chapter Four will explore the evolving relationship of the Chinese government to the film community and how the circumstances of *Shijie*'s production can inform our understanding of its content.

[117] Gaetano 34.

Chapter 4

Shijie and the State: Fashioning the World

Known as a premier Chinese independent filmmaker and a director compromised by the lure of foreign fame and fortune, Jia Zhangke's reputation varies greatly among the international community. A member of the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, Jia has made a name for himself with his gritty realist style, his long shots, long takes, and use of nonprofessional actors. Abroad, his work has been shown in theatres around the world and has garnered honors at international film festivals. Acclaimed American director Martin Scorsese famously hailed Jia's intensity and vision, claiming, "[He] reinvented cinema."[118] Only recently in China, however, have Jia's films been legally distributed and screened. Banned from making films due to his bypassing the state's official regulations and procedures, Jia like many of his peers, turned to unofficial channels and foreign investments sources. In this way, he was able to use his films to paint a portrait of China independent of State influence and indifferent to censure. Until *Shijie,* Jia's films focused on life in small town China and the experiences of young people caught between the images of the outside world and the reality of the situation in which they lived. With *Shijie,* the shift of location to China's capital of Beijing coincides with Jia's restoration of status as a "legitimate" filmmaker in China and his partnership with the state-run Shanghai Film Studio. The reasons for this newly wrought alliance are numerous and, in some respects, ambiguous. This chapter will explore the paths taken by both Jia and the State film system to arrive at the making of *Shijie*, a film able to both accommodate and belie the true nature of their relationship. The film's production

[118] Michael Berry, Xiao Wu•Platform•Unknown Pleasures: Jia Zhangke's 'Hometown Trilogy' (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 9.

highlights both parties' efforts to create and reshape the images of China and the world, at home and abroad, as well as the tension inherent in this local and global process.

SEEING THE WORLD IN JIA ZHANGKE'S FILMS

The group variously called the Urban Generation, Newborn Generation and Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, are known for their radically different approach to both filmmaking and content.[119] Choosing to work outside of the state-run studio system, these filmmakers sought alternative ways of producing and distributing their work, in addition to employing themes, methods, and locations outside the mainstream. While Jia's films differ in their story lines, they all share common characteristics and themes and culminate in *Shijie*, which signaled his move toward the mainstream. Born in 1970 in Fenyang, Shanxi province, Jia Zhangke was raised in the same rural countryside as the characters he depicts. Growing up at the end of the Cultural Revolution, the China that Jia experienced was one of rapid change. The reforms and opening up only accelerated the process; by the time Jia returned home for a visit from attending school at the Beijing Film Academy in 1997, the Fenyang he knew, as well as the people who inhabited it, were transformed. Struck by the sudden and drastic nature of the changes, Jia would make Fenyang his emblematic "hometown China" and the setting for his first two films *Xiao Wu* and *Platform.*[120] Chris Berry names Jia's hometown as an important factor in establishing his vision of China's transformation; its destruction symbolizes the erosion of tradition, stability and even memory, and its effects are best seen in the physical environment and the people who struggle to negotiate it. Of the portrayal of the hometown in Jia's films, Berry writes:

---

[119] Zhang Zhen, "Introduction: Bearing Witness: Chinese Urban Cinema in the Era of 'Transformation' (*zhuanxing*)," *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, Ed. Zhang Zhen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 9.
[120] Berry 2009: 17.

> What we witness is an *implosion* of the hometown as relationships, moral codes, ways of life and even physical structures are disassembled and destabilized before the protagonists can even comprehend the changes, let alone regain their bearings.[121]

Intent on acknowledging and describing the changes taking place, not just nationally, but in the lives of everyday people, Jia chose to focus on young rural people and the specific challenges they face. In doing so, he hoped to demonstrate how their unequal access to not only resources, but to hope, makes them a vulnerable segment of Chinese society.[122]

Jia's third film *Unknown Pleasures* also takes up this theme, this time in the city of Datong, also in Shanxi province. Surviving on a diet of pop music, violent films, and their own pipedreams of status and money, the main characters Binbin and Xiao Ji wander the streets in a hopeless stupor. Prevented from attaining their desires (Xiao Ji's of the pretty dancer Qiaoqiao, Binbin's of joining the army and going to Beijing), they succumb to the bleakness of their surroundings and stage a desperate and pathetic bank heist. A striking feature of this film is the saturation of popular music, television and media images that have become available through new technologies. In the film's time, the ubiquity of said images contrasts with their relative newness in rural mid-90s China. Newly aware of the disparities between their own life situations and those of the rest of China and the world, these technologies created new pressures and actually had a negative impact on young people's lives.[123] The promises of the market of prosperity and improved quality of life proved illusory for Binbin and Xiao Ji. Theirs is a double loss; they gain increased access only to images of wealth and pleasure, while suffering through the demolition of their physical environment. In Berry's words:

---

[121] Berry 2009: 16.
[122] Batto 2005.
[123] Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 193.

> [While] Jia's characters are repeatedly alienated from their *physical* surroundings, it is the new world of materialist desires and Coca-Cola dreams emerging from the ruins that will provide the *spiritual* alienation that will further haunt [them] in their cyclical struggle with the reality of their environment and the new manufactured ideals that arise from its ashes.[124]

Jia's cinematic world is one of disaffected youths struggling against the insurmountable forces of a false modernity. Their experience of the new China and the glossy, optimistic one portrayed by the media, government, and the privileged are irreconcilable. It is this incompatibility of people's expectations and aspirations with their real and limited opportunities that gives modern life in China a surreal quality, and sets the stage for *Shijie*.

In setting his fourth film inside a world-themed park in Beijing, Jia established *Shijie* as his most ambitious and challenging film to date. Once again, we see the lives and hopes of young rural men and women take center stage, but this time with the additional demarcation of their status as migrants in the big city. Though they came to Beijing to have a better future, their own dreams of "joining up with the world" (*yu shijie jiegui*) appear as shallow and false as the miniature worlds that they inhabit. Also a critique of the increasingly consumerist nature of Chinese society, the young women who work and live in Jia's World Park are treated as commodities to be consumed, both as living scenery and entertainment within the park and as sexual playthings outside it. Throughout the film, Jia calls attention to the disparity between the world as it is presented by China to its people, and the limited and superficial ways in which they are actually able to experience it. In this way, he effectively critiques the projects of modernization and globalization. It would also be fair to note, however, that *Shijie*'s production would not likely have been possible without the cooperation and assistance of the Shanghai Film Studio, which is still run by the State. While *Shijie's* criticisms of

[124] Berry 2009: 121-122.

China's policies were subtle by contrast, his next film *Still Life,* although also made with the Shanghai Film Studio, was openly critical of official policies and government corruption.[125] All this leads to the issue of the Chinese government's policy towards the regulation of and cooperation with China's independent film community. Somewhere between turning a blind eye, accommodating, and selling out lies the nature of the mutually beneficial partnership between Jia Zhangke and China's film system. As so much of his work is devoted to the issues raised by China's economic developments and market orientation, it is fitting that the making of *The World* has a part to play in that dialogue.

FILMMAKING IN CHINA: WORKING WITH-IN/OUT THE SYSTEM

Prior to the moves to nationalize China's filmmaking system culminating in the Communist Party's aggressive seizure of control in 1949, Chinese film production was dominated by the private sector.[126] By 1953, the private filmmaking sector was eliminated and would remain obsolete for nearly the next forty years.[127] During this period filmmakers were employees of the government and produced their films through its studios. This state-run studio system persisted even after ideological and procedural restraints were loosened in the late eighties and early nineties. At that time, the Fifth Generation of Chinese filmmakers were making a name for themselves in the international community and setting the standard for aesthetics and themes. The state studio system meanwhile turned to more profitable mainstream genres, making it

[125] "Speculating on why the film went into release untouched, Mr. Jia said: 'The impact of the Three Gorges project is phenomenal. It's not something the government can cover up'" (Lim 2008).
[126] Paul G. Pickowicz, "Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China," *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China,* Eds. Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006) 3.
[127] Ibid.

extremely difficult for directors to secure funding for "experimental" films.[128] The Sixth Generation of filmmakers came of age during this time and began producing films outside the state-run system. Various reasons exist for their decision to work "independently,"[129] but principal among them is the rejection of the quasi-historical cultural narratives that dominated the aesthetics of the Fifth Generation. While the style and subject matter of their work differed greatly from that of their predecessors, it was their production and distribution methods that attracted government ire. Skipping the script and permit approval process before initial production of their films, they completed their work overseas and submitted it to international film festivals, also without official permission. Gaining attention and winning awards at these festivals helped many directors develop partnerships and acquire funding for future projects from international production companies. Filmmakers who circumvented the system in this manner were often banned from producing films in China.[130]

Despite having his first three films banned for similar infractions, Jia Zhangke is still considered to be one of China's most successful young filmmakers. Because of his longtime status as "unofficial," his reputation was largely established on the acceptance and acclaim of his films on the international film festival circuit. Though he flaunted the rules of the state film system in making his early films, in 2004 the China Film Bureau restored Jia's credential as a legitimate director.[131] While Jia can claim that his

---

[128] Yingjin Zhang, "Industry and Ideology: A Centennial Review of Chinese Cinema," *World Literature Today* Volume 77 Number 3/4 October-December 2003: 12.

[129] "Independent" is itself a contested term when speaking of the production of Chinese films. While some prefer "underground," it retains too much of a subversive connotation to be of use in this discussion. Most agree that the characteristics of independent cinema include: low budget, both financial and creative freedom from interference, and a personal and authentic perspective (that is, one not "mass" in its character or appeal) (See Esther M.K. Cheung, "Dialogues with critics on Chinese independent cinema," *Jump Cut: A Review if Contemporary Media* Number 49 Spring 2007).

[130] A ban meant exclusion of access to state-owned studios, processing labs and equipment rental services nationwide, but could even include passport seizure (Zhen 11).

[131] Berry 2005: 184.

cooperation with the state-run system was an effort to reach a wider Chinese audience, the motivations of the Chinese government remain oblique. According to Paul Pickowicz, one the one hand, the Chinese government has already established a mutually beneficial unspoken contract with independent filmmakers. It will turn a blind eye toward their production and distribution violations, provided that they self-censor themselves of politically dangerous content and their domestic audience remains limited.[132] On the other hand, not preventing even "illegal" Chinese films from being screened abroad helps soften the government's reputation.[133] Essentially, all the government has to do is sit back, allow filmmakers to make their films, make their names on the international stage, and then take advantage of their prestige and visibility by recruiting them to make movies within the official system. In this way, they still have final say (in terms of censorship) over the final product and stand to reap the profits, both domestically and internationally, of a director with an established reputation for not being under the heel of the state.

SHIFTING LOYALTIES: INDEPENDENT/OFFICIAL, GLOBAL/LOCAL

Warmly referred to as the "migrant worker director" (*mingong daoyan*) because of his meager rural origins, Jia continually draws on his firsthand experiences when making his films.[134] For him, then, the move to work within the system could represent an effort to reach the people whom he has always claimed his films are about. As an independent director, Jia was denied access to official film distribution networks, effectively limiting his Chinese viewing audience to purchasers of pirated DVDs and VCDs and small numbers of university students and film buffs. *Shijie*'s commercial release marked the first time one of Jia's films was shown in major Chinese theaters. Jia,

[132] Pickowicz 6.
[133] Ibid., 8.
[134] Zhen 16.

however, is not uncritical of the Chinese film system with which he now cooperates. He names people's lack of knowledge about film culture for the proliferation of genre films and the predominance of Hollywood films, both of which strip Chinese film culture of its richness and diversity.[135] About the reason he thinks his films are now authorized by the government, Jia said, "It's because of political change. The law itself hasn't changed. This change is because, nowadays, a film is considered to be a consumer product, the product of an industry; so control has become more flexible."[136] Once again, Jia draws attention to the commodity nature of life in today's China; films are only viewed in terms of their market value as artistic value has taken a backseat. Yet more than a commodity relationship exists between the Chinese government and Chinese filmmakers. Often credited with revealing life in China as it truly exists, Sixth Generation filmmakers work under the double yoke of responsibility to country and to a newly-forged global audience. As in Jia's case, this situation can sometimes prove mutually beneficial. Just as the government took advantage of his international reputation to enhance its own credibility, Jia seized the opportunity to promote his own views about the integrity of its globalizing ventures.

Made on a budget of RMB 12 million, more than twice that of *Unknown Pleasures, Shijie* grossed a modest domestic box office of RMB 2 million.[137] His next film *Still Life*, made at a budget of RMB 30 million, also grossed RMB 2 million despite Jia winning Best Director at Cannes and the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival.[138] Clearly, Jia's films were no match for big-budget Chinese genre films and

---

[135] Batto 2005.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Darrell Williams Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2008) 159.
[138] Joan Dupont, "Chronicling China in Upheaval," *International Herald Tribune* 21 September 2006.

Hollywood blockbusters. *Shijie*'s real worth, then, lies in its replication of China's present dynamics and struggle to realize the values of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Just as Jia's reputation has evolved from hometown, rural, migrant director to internationally known and admired auteur so, too, does China wish to alter its reputation from isolated third-world country to global powerhouse.

Contained within these parallel transformations is the ever-changing connection between the local (associated with the rural) and global (associated with the urban) in Chinese society. Although the relationship between country and city in China evolved differently than in the West,[139] as Raymond Williams argues, the act of myth-making about the idyllic countryside served to reproduce the rural-urban divide and justify existing social iniquities.[140] Chinese village life with its traditional values and irrational beliefs was seen as incompatible with the economic opportunities and potential for progress characteristic of city life. In early 20th century China, the city represented contact with the modern West and the possibilities it contained.[141] In the present day, China still struggles with the significance of these distinctions. The city has become the source and center of economic development and progress, but the countryside provides the raw human power to accomplish its projects. China wishes to use its cultural community to build its reputation as a more open and cosmopolitan country, but recruits

---

[139] It was not until the early 1900s that significant distinctions in identity between the country and the city existed in China (David Faure and Tao Tao Liu eds., *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception* (Oxford: Palgrave, 2002) 1). When political reforms and technological and economic transformations, originating in the city, began to separate the two as forces of change, the city gained its reputation as the seat of China's potential for modernity. Simultaneously, the country and village life were denigrated as a source of backwardness. Socialism, with its rhetoric of a clear and necessary rural-urban divide, only enhanced that perception.

[140] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[141] During the Republican era, Western educated Chinese returned to Chinese cities armed with an "awareness of the industrialized Western sense of the rural-urban divide" which enhanced their own vitriolic writings about the backwardness of the traditional Chinese mentality represented by the countryside (Faure and Liu 12).

its unofficial critics, independent filmmakers, for the job. It appears Jia's journey from rural Shanxi to world stage, from unofficial to state-sponsored director, presages China's own passage to global preeminence.

By choosing a theme park for the setting of *Shijie*, Jia established a ready-made global context for his film. In this setting, the glitz and glamour of the costumed park workers, the exotic sites of world architecture, the hustle and bustle of big-city Beijing, all read just like the theme parks that Chinese people know from experience how to negotiate. The film uses the very same space that it denounces to charm and in doing so, creates a unique and effective medium for Jia's message. To the Chinese government, a film with a clear but restrained message about the dark side of China's modernization poses less threat than opportunity. More than a public accusation, under the state's sponsorship, the film can be viewed as an advertisement; its images are those of theme park China- cosmopolitan, contemporary, and with high production values. Without a clear criticism of China's policies or politics, and in the hands of the state, the film's message becomes ambiguous. This ambiguity mirrors the balancing act performed by both China's independent (or formerly independent) filmmakers and the government. In competing with overseas films for box office revenues and building international reputations, both parties have compromised in order to take advantage of the other's competing agenda. In the end, however, *Shijie* expands the ideology of new global China; the freedom, cosmopolitanism and modernity that the park represents all portray Beijing (and therefore China as a whole) as the home of the world. Here China has co-opted global space, the famous sites of the world in the World Park, to create a global-local space for its people. But it has also co-opted its own local-global filmmaker, Jia Zhangke, to create a China suited to both a local and global audience.

While still mired in the dynamics of its own local internal and global external identity, China's progress has allowed it to explore new media for branding itself to an international audience. Using the 2008 Summer Olympics as a platform, China undertook the most impressive and expensive project to overhaul an Olympic city to date. Only the third Olympics to be held in Asia, Beijing's 2008 Olympics represented a milestone for China, a measure of trust from the international community, and the opportunity to create a global space that would represent a new China to the world. The next chapter will discuss the meaning of the Olympic Village in China's modernization project and draw some conclusions regarding the nature of China's global space.

Chapter 5

Global Space in the 2008 Olympics and Beyond

The NBC coverage of the Beijing 2008 Olympic opening ceremonies opens with a short historical survey of the world's most populous and fastest growing nation. While shots of Tiananmen Square fade into a panoramic scan of the Great Wall and scenes of Chinese faces in a bustling street market, a voiceover describes the significance of China hosting its first Olympic Games. "[From] the world's greatest wall builders, makers of a Forbidden City, what happens tonight is not merely a small step, but a great leap. China is welcoming the world."[142] As the scenes transition from those of the Chinese landscape to the faces and feats of international athletes, the voiceover continues, "Who will they be when this is over?" It refers both to the athletes, "sharpened to a razor's edge" and to China.[143] From the China of 2,500 years of ancient history to the hosts of the most extravagant and remarkable Olympic Games yet, the country has undergone incredible changes in its social, cultural and economic spheres. All of which have the international community asking, "Who will China be when this is over?" The construction of the Games' venues, the reconstruction of Beijing city space, and the staging of the Olympic ceremonies have all been fashioned to answer this question, and replace an old image of China with a new one.

CHINA'S OLYMPICS ON THE WORLD STAGE

Internationally-recognized scholar of Chinese sport culture, Susan Brownell, draws a connection between the staging of world cultural events such as World's Fairs

---

[142] *Opening Ceremony: Beijing 2008 Complete Opening Ceremony*, Executive Producer Dick Ebersol, NBC, DVD, Ten Mayflower Productions, 2008.
[143] Ibid.

and international sporting events and China's emergence on the world stage. She notes that the third modern Olympics, held in St. Louis in 1904, and largely regarded as America's entry into the league of industrialized, prosperous nations, took place at the same time as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a world's fair.[144] While China did not take part in Olympic athletic competitions until the 1932 Los Angeles Games, 1904 also marked the first time the Qing dynasty sent an official delegation to an international exposition.[145] Following the model it witnessed there, the Nanyang Industrial Exposition was staged in Nanjing in 1910. China's first attempt at an international exposition was held in conjunction with the first regional sporting games in Asia and was participated in by athletes from the Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Hong Kong.[146] The interim period since that first foray into this kind of global participation and sports competition has been a turbulent one for China. As the world's largest peacetime international event, where and how the Olympics are staged has many implications for the host city and country.

Holding the Olympics in Asia is a fairly recent phenomenon and coincides with major changes in Asian society. The makeovers and modernization undertaken by both Tokyo (1964) and Seoul (1988) had as much to do with their preparation to host the Games as to be seen and judged by the international community.[147] As it did for America at the turn of the 20th century, the hosting of the Olympics by China at the start of the 21st century exhibits a measure of trust and respect by the international community, both that

---

144 Susan Brownell, "China's Olympic Road," *China in 2008: a Year of Great Significance*, Ed. Jonathan D. Spence (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) 148.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid., 149-150.
147 Victor Cha, *Beyond the Final Score: The Politics of Sport in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 108-109.

the Games will be successful in their production and that the ideals of the Olympics with be upheld.[148]

Although China was unsuccessful in its bid for the 2000 Olympics,[149] its decision to bid for the 2008 Games was met with strong public approval. Guaranteeing US $40 billion for redevelopment and enhancement, Beijing's bid promised the largest amount ever spent in preparation for an Olympic Games.[150] The building of highways, communication networks, sports venues, hotels and hospitality venues, and the "greening" of the environment were all undertaken in greater numbers and in less time than ever before. While much of the development took place in direct proportion to the location's proximity to and involvement with the Games themselves, other work was done to enhance infrastructure in post-Games Beijing.[151] Arguably the most spectacular and expensive construction, however, took place in the Olympic Village where the opening and closing ceremonies and nearly half of the Olympic events took place. Situated on a newly built 2,800-acre park in north Beijing, the Olympic Green, the National Stadium (also known as the Bird's Nest) and the National Aquatic Swimming Center (also known as the Water Cube) became the most recognizable symbols of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It was through these built structures and through the staging of

---

[148] In *Beyond the Final Score*, however, Victor Cha argues that the three themes of "Green," "High-technology," and "People's" Olympics were designed to circumvent the Olympic ideals of fair competition, freedom, rewarding merit and performance, and following the rules. Because of its status as an "illiberal regime," China was forced to conceive of new, value neutral concepts by which it could abide (Cha 2009).

[149] Even though it had led all previous rounds of votes, China lost in the final round of votes by only two ballots. The loss was felt hard, leading to much speculation and backlash, especially against the United States, who many felt had lobbied unscrupulously against China's human rights record, in particular the then-recent Tiananmen Square protests.

[150] Cha 106.

[151] More than 400 miles of new expressways, four new subway lines, and a new airport terminal were constructed (Cha 111), $3.6 billion was earmarked for laying fiber optic cables for information and telecommunication, as well as the very practical installation of 4,700 new Western-style public restrooms (in Carolyn Marvin, "'All Under Heaven'- Megaspace in Beijing," *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, Eds. Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008) 233, 235).

spectacles like the opening ceremonies that China sought to establish its own "coming out party" as that of a new China, strong, cutting-edge, chic and prosperous.

GLOBAL SPACE IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE

While historically stadiums in Communist China have been a reflection of the party-state's power and prestige,[152] the global space of new China is modern and international. In all aspects, from its blueprints to its nickname, the National Stadium is emblematic of the hybrid modernity that China aims to portray to the world. More than a world-class city, Beijing presented itself as a successful case of the co-existence of modern development with an ancient cultural heritage.[153] Global modern architecture was the chosen medium for translating China's progress, power, and commitment to the ideal of internationalism into visible built form. In choosing the plans for the National Stadium, the Beijing Municipal Planning Committee staged an international architectural competition, judged both by international and domestic experts. The winning firm, Herzog and de Meuron of Switzerland, built their stadium on the grounds of the Olympic Village, itself constructed from a master plan by an American firm. Collaborating on the design with Ai Weiwei, a well-established Chinese artist, son of 1920s poet Ai Qing, and recent returnee from New York,[154] a diversity of architectural elements came together in the Bird's Nest, so called due to its interwoven steel frame. In contrast to the stadium built for the 1990 Asian Games, with its "gigantic silver roof mixing both traditional form and ultra-modern materials [that in its form] reflected official aspirations for the

---

[152] Brownell 2008: 73.

[153] This heritage, perhaps some self-conscious addition of *Chineseness* amid all the homogeneous modernity, was communicated in many ways, including Beijing's Olympic emblem, the placement of the Olympic Green in accordance with *feng shui* principles, and the narrative of the opening ceremonies, which will be discussed later.

[154] Xuefei Ren, "Architecture and Nation Building in the Age of Globalization: Construction of the National Stadium of Beijing for the 2008 Olympics," *Journal of Urban Affairs* Volume 30 Number 2 (2008): 182.

creation of a distinctively modern identity with Chinese characteristics," nothing about the Bird's Nest appears Chinese, except for its nickname.[155] Yet, it is in its very innovation and modern aesthetic that it has become a recognizable structure and symbol of today's China.

Opposite the Bird's Nest in the Olympic Green, the Aquatic Center won Popular Science's 2006 award for "What's New in Engineering," cost $200 million and seats 17,000 spectators.[156] Following Beijing's theme of a "Green Olympics," both buildings use state of the art energy-efficient technology in their construction and functioning and represent an engineering triumph by any standard. Placed as the cornerstones of the Olympic Village, in China's capital city and first Olympic Games, they represent a new and different version of China. Along with the other two themes of the Games, "High-technology Olympics" and "People's Olympics," "Green Olympics" refers to an international standard and supplants the contentious language of Chinese nationalism with which the international community has so often taken issue. The new language and architecture of the games- neutral, modern, global- highlights a new, identifiable, and marketable China.

NARRATIVES OF NEW CHINA: THE OPENING CEREMONIES AND ZHANG YIMOU

Arguably the most striking example of the new image was presented via the Opening Ceremonies of the Games. Directed by internationally acclaimed Chinese director Zhang Yimou,[157] the nearly four-hour ceremonies were truly awe-inspiring.

---

[155] Anne-Marie Broudehoux, *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 153. The name of the stadium is reminiscent of the highly prized Chinese delicacy bird's nest soup.
[156] Cha 113.
[157] Steven Spielberg, also initially involved as a creative director, eventually terminated his involvement to show his support for those who questioned China's role in Sudan, for which the American actress Mia Farrow, an outspoken detractor of the war in Darfur, famously labeled the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, "The Genocide Olympics" (Elizabeth C. Economy and Adam Segal, "China's Olympic Nightmare: What the Games Mean for Beijing's Future," *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2008).

Designed to portray an influential and affluent China emerging from its chaotic and degraded past, Yimou's ceremony created a beautiful narrative journey from China's distant past all the way to its bright, technologized future. Employing 15,000 performers, dancers, drummers, aerial artists, and singers, the ceremonies evoked feelings of both admiration and reservation. The spectacle of thousands of boxes, seemingly powered by hydraulics, moving in perfect unison was revealed to each contain a person. Mass spectacles of this kind wow the eye and distract the mind; Anne-Marie Broudehoux reminds us that spectacles in China serve important functions not only on the world stage but also domestically:

> [Shows], spectacles, festivals, and rituals are not solely directed to an international audience in the hope of attracting visitors and capital, but they also act as important tools of national representation by reviving national pride and unity and convincing local citizens of the beneficence of the system. [158]

An ideological tool to aestheticize national and international aims, the Olympic ceremonies and games were broadcast and seen by millions in China and abroad. For a city, and to an extent, nation, that endured seven years of reconstruction, taxation, displacement, and exclusion in the lead up the Games, the spectacle broadcast on television was, for the majority, the only means to experience China's "coming out party." China's promises of national redemption playing out on the international stage were witnessed by Chinese and foreigner alike as a series of spectacular performances, and a well-organized and smoothly run 2008 Summer Olympics.

More than simply a local or global spectacle, the opening ceremonies can be seen as a continuation of China's narrative of progress and the evolution of its worldview. For an occasion when the eyes of the world were to be trained on China, it is no coincidence that Zhang Yimou, acclaimed film director and Chinese celebrity, was brought in to

[158] Broudehoux 148.

direct the Opening Ceremonies.[159] Although his most internationally acclaimed films were among his earliest, his most successful film to date, 2004's *Hero* (*Yingxiong*), was also China's most profitable export film in history, grossing US$53 million (Davis and Yeh 2008). Following on the heels of Ang Lee's widely successful martial arts epic *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero* also featured an all-star international cast and crew, including Zhang Ziyi, Jet Li, Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung, cinematographer Christopher Doyle, and martial arts choreographer Ching Siu-tung.[160] A visually stunning melodrama, *Hero* chronicles the aborted assassination attempt by a nameless assassin (*Wuming*) of Qin Shihuang, the emperor who unified China in the third century B.C.E. Behind the assassination plot are those who believe that the emperor's ruthlessness has brought nothing but suffering to his people and will only end with his death. By the film's conclusion, however, Nameless is convinced of the justness of the emperor's mission to unite *tianxia,* "all under the heavens," and sacrifices his life for the cause.

In the film's historical setting *tianxia* refers to the unification of the warring states under the banner of one nation and the bringing to an end of uncertainty and conflict. In the present time, *tianxia* could likewise refer to an ideology of the irreversibility and inevitability of China's rise to power. With *Hero*, Zhang makes explicit a worldview that sees China once again as a center of progress whose higher cause justifies almost any means.[161] Both his worldview and that expressed in *Shijie* foresee a new era of prosperity

---

[159] In fact, Zhang has been involved with spectacles of "Chinese cultural essence" multiple times, most notably during the closing ceremonies of the 2004 Athens Summer Olympics and in directing the video that contributed to Beijing's bid for the 2008 Olympics. The fact that his adaptation of Puccini's opera *Turandot* was staged within the Forbidden City demonstrates his current status as a favored cultural authority (Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007) 37).

[160] Jason McGrath, *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) 220.

[161] Many critics called *Hero* a thinly veiled propaganda tool of the repressive Chinese government. They claimed that Qin Shihuang's use of violence in pursuit of power mirrors China's at times violent policies, particularly in reining in its outlying regions such as Tibet and perhaps before long, Taiwan.

and power for China; in both, however, it is up to China to decide to what lengths it will go to realize that future. Zhang's image of a new China presented to the world in *Hero* and through the Opening Ceremonies signals a globalization of China's national mission, and transforms the event from a "coming out" party to a "coming back" party. While *Shijie* and *Hero* convey conflicting messages about the legitimacy of China's international aims, both films can speak to the role of global media in transforming personal and political agendas into narratives.

CONCLUSIONS

"A stunning, stunning achievement" declared the NBC commentator at the close of the Opening Ceremonies.[162] "[An] Olympics that virtually in every regard made history" wrote another.[163] It seems that the Games were successful in their aims of displaying China's progress and prowess on the international stage. To much of the world, China had long been characterized as a nation of self-imposed exile, suffering still from the humiliations of past foreign occupation and the deprivations of its tumultuous political past. The new China of the 2000 Olympic bid's slogan, "New Beijing, New Olympics," is one that has undertaken the task to redefine itself, in both the international and national realms, but has also in the process succeeded in redefining the Olympics.

The official slogan of the Beijing Olympics, "One world, one dream," can help connect to our discussion of Jia Zhangke's film *Shijie*. For the film, a better slogan might be "One dream- the world." *Shijie* depicts the reality of China today and one version of the promises of modernization and globalization made by the country to its people. Just as Chinese people visit the park in the film, in their real lives they also engage in tourist

---

[162] *Opening Ceremonies* 2008.

[163] John Abrahamson, ""Truly Exceptional Games,"" NBCOlympics.com 24 August 2008, 25 October 2009 <http://www.2008.nbcolympics.com/newscenter/news/newsid=254895.html#truly+exceptional+games>.

practices designed to enhance their knowledge of and desire for the world. However, just as Tao and Anna, Taisheng and Little Sister, all came to the park to realize the dream and failed, in truth, the freedom and cosmopolitan ideals presented by new China remain out of reach for the majority of Chinese people. The reconciliation of this bleak fact requires a careful balancing act for those who wish to perpetuate the myth of a uniformly prosperous and optimistic country. By presenting the people with "the world" (the World Park, *The World*, the global space of the Olympic Village, and its spectacle), it is possible to make them fluent in the language and signs of modernity without providing them the means to achieve it.

As World's Fairs and theme parks did in the past, the international space reserved for the Olympic Games maintains a singular status in the world. No matter where they take place, the Games are respected for the ideals they impart and the space for freedom and competition that they create. In China, where real access to freedom has been lacking, efforts have been made to transform the way people think about the world and China's relationship to it. With the Olympic Village, China created a space that would be consumed by the international community, a truly global space. What remains unclear is what effect (if any) the Olympic Games will have on China's future envisioning of and engagement with the world. So, too, is it unclear whether the relationships forged between filmmakers like Jia Zhangke and the state-run system will endure and evolve toward more openness and cooperation. Although the prospects for a more receptive China seem better today than ever before, the propensity for illusion and artifice critiqued by Jia in *Shijie* remain a central feature of China's modernization experience. For now, it seems the dream to "be modern," shared by nation and people alike, will remain the only access to modernity for most.

Bibliography

Abrahamson, John. "Truly Exceptional Games." NBCOlympics.com 24 August 2008. 25 October 2009 <http://www.2008.nbcolympics.com/newscenter/news/newsid=254895.html#truly+exceptional+games>.

Anagnost, Ann. "The Nationscape: Movement in the Field of Vision." *Positions* 1:3, Winter (1993): 585-606.

Ap, John. "An Assessment of Theme Park Development in China." *Tourism in China*. Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003. 195-214.

Barthes, Roland. *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1979.

Batto, Patricia, R.S. "The World of Jia Zhangke." *China Perspectives* Number 60 (2005). <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/document2843.html>.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. Ed. Mark Poster. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

BBC Monitoring International Reports. "China Boosts 'Red Tourism' in Revolutionary Bases." 22 February 2005.

Berry, Michael. *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Berry, Michael. *Xiao Wu•Platform•Unknown Pleasures: Jia Zhangke's 'Hometown Trilogy.'* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Brownell, Susan. *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Brownell, Susan. "China's Olympic Road." *China in 2008: a Year of Great Significance*. Ed. Jonathan D. Spence. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 147-161

Broudehoux, Anne-Marie. *The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Bryman, Alan. *Disney and His Worlds*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Buruma, Ian. "AsiaWorld." *The New York Review of Books*. Volume 50 Number 10. 12 June 2003.

Campanella, Thomas J. "China's Gardens of Time and Space." *Places* 10:1 (1995). 4-7.

Cha, Victor. *Beyond the Final Score: The Politics of Sport in Asia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Chan, Andrew. “Moving with the Times.” *Film Comment* March-April 2009. 40-43.

Cheung, Esther M.K. “Dialogues with critics on Chinese independent cinema.” *Jump Cut: A Review if Contemporary Media* Number 49 Spring 2007.

China Daily. “Disney yet to get nod for park in Shanghai.” 10 August 2009. 25 August 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-08/10/content_8547128.htm>.

China Daily. “Domestic Travel Set to Grow.” 10 June 2008. 25 July 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-06/10/content_6747891.htm>.

China Daily. “Hostess candidates denied due to poor smiles.” 29 August 2006. 9 September 2006 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/200608/29/content_676460.htm>.

China Daily. “International Tourism Festival to Kick Off in Yinchuan.” 8 September 2006. 25 August 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2006-09/08/content_684038.htm>.

China Daily. “Travel Sector Survives on ‘Theme’.” 2 April 2005. 20 July 2009 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/02/content_430352.htm>.

Cohen, Erik. “Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism.” *Annals of Tourism Research* Volume 15 (1988): 371-386.

Davis, Darrell Williams and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh. *East Asian Screen Industries*. London: British Film Institute, 2008.

Davis, Susan G. “The Theme Park: Global Industry and Cultural Form.” *Media, Culture & Society* Volume 18 (1996): 399-422.

Denton, Kirk A. “Museums, Memorial Sites and Exhibitionary Culture in the People’s Republic of China.” *The China Quarterly* Issue 183 (2005): 565-586.

Dupont, Joan. “Chronicling China in Upheaval.” *International Herald Tribune* 21 September 2006.

Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

Economy, Elizabeth C. and Adam Segal. “China’s Olympic Nightmare: What the Games Mean for Beijing’s Future.” *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2008.

Faure, David and Tao Tao Liu. “Introduction.” *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*. Eds. David Faure and Tao Tao Liu. Oxford: Palgrave, 2002. 1-16.

Feifer, Maxine. *Tourism in History: From Imperial Rome to the Present*. New York: Stein and Day, 1986.

Fjellman, Stephen M. *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.

Fowler, Geoffrey A. and Merissa Marr. "Disney and the Great Wall- Hong Kong's Magic Kingdom Struggles to Attract Chinese Who 'Don't Understand' Park." *The Wall Street Journal* 9 February 2006.

French, Howard W. "Bedlam in the air for China flight attendants." *The New York Times* 11 January 2005. 12.

Gaetano, Arianne M. "Rural Women and Modernity in Globalizing China: Seeing Jia Zhangke's *The World*." *Visual Anthropology Review* Volume 25 Number 1 Spring 2009.

Gaetano, Arianne M. and Tamara Jacka. "Introduction: Focusing on Migrant Women." *On the Move: Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China*. Eds. Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. 1-40.

Goodman, Peter S. "Car Culture Captivates China; Sales Boom Along with Potential Problems." *The Washington Post* 8 March 2004.

Guangrui, Zhang. "China's Tourism Since 1978: Policies, Experiences, and Lessons Learned." *Tourism in China*. Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003. 13-34.

Haley, Laurie. "Tourism with Chinese Characteristics: The State and the Market in China's Domestic Tourism Industry." Thesis. The University of Texas at Austin, 2007.

Handler, Richard and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Harris, Neil. "Expository Expositions: Preparing for the Theme Parks." *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*. Ed. Karal Ann Marling. Paris: Flammarion, 1997. 19-28.

Harrison, Mark. "Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and the Globalization of Propaganda." *Millenium- Journal of International Studies* Number 34 (2006): 569-572.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Havis, Richard James. "Illusory Worlds: An Interview with Jia Zhangke." *CINEASTE* Fall 2005. 58-59.

Hilo, Clifford. "Negotiating Global/Local Identities: Jia Zhang-ke's *The World*." *Mediascape* Volume 1 Number 3 Spring 2007.

Hoberman, J. "J. Hoberman on the films of Jia Zhangke." *The Village Voice* Summer 2005. 305-309.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Jacka, Tamara. *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration, and Social Change*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005.

Jaffee, Valerie. "Bringing the World to the Nation: Jia Zhangke and the Legitimation of Chinese Underground Film." *Senses of Cinema* May 2004. 8.

Jarvey, Grant, Dong-Jhy Hwang, and Mel Brennan. *Sport, Revolution, and the Beijing Olympics*. Oxford: Berg, 2008.

Koshar, Rudy, ed. *Histories of Leisure*. Oxford: Berg, 2002.

Kratz, Corinne A. and Ivan Karp. "Wonder and Worth: Disney Museums in World Showcase." *Museum Anthropology* Volume 17 Issue 3 (1993): 32-42.

Lee, Chin-Chuan, ed. *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2006.

Liang, Su-Chiun and An-Tien Hsieh. "Individual's Perception of Career Development and Job Burnout Among Flight Attendants in Taiwan." *The International Journal of Aviation Psychology* 15:2 (2005): 119-134.

Lim, Dennis. "Blurring Reality's Edge in Fluid China." *The New York Times* 20 January 2008.

Lukas, Scott A. *Theme Park*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.

MacCannell, Dean. *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Schoken Books, 1976.

Marling, Karal Ann, ed. *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*. Paris: Flammarion, 1997.

Martin, Dan. "Fakes a real fact of life in China's heated economy." *The Standard* 11 April 2007. 1 October 2009 <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=20&art_id=41990&sid=13078355&con_type=1&d_str=20070411>.

Marvin, Carolyn. "'All Under Heaven'- Megaspace in Beijing." *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*. Eds. Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008. 229-259.

McGrath, Jason. "The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic." *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Zhang Zhen. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 81-114.

McGrath, Jason. *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

McMahon, David. "Life and times of a high-flyer." *The Standard* 28 October 2002. 8 September 2006 <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/archive_news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=23646&sid=&con_type=1&archive_d_str=20021028>.

Merkel-Hess, Kate, Kenneth L. Pomeranz, and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, eds. *China in 2008: A Year of Great Significance*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Naquin, Susan and Chün-fang Yü. "Introduction: Pilgrimage in China." *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Eds. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 1-38.

Newcomb, Amelia. "In land of bicycle, car boom brings freedom of open road." *Christian Science Monitor* 3 August 2005.

Nyíri, Pál. *Scenic Spots: Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006.

Oakes, Tim. *Tourism and Modernity in China*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Omelia, Johanna and Michael Waldock. *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*. Portland: Collectors Press, 2006.

Ong, Ryan. "New Beijing, Great Olympics: Beijing and its Unfolding Olympic Legacy." *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* Volume 4 Number 2 Summer 2004. 35-49.

Opening Ceremony: Beijing 2008 Complete Opening Ceremony. Executive Producer Dick Ebersol. NBC. DVD. Ten Mayflower Productions, 2008.

Osnos, Evan. "The Long Shot." *New Yorker* Volume 85 Issue 13, 11 May 2009. 88-95.

Pickowicz, Paul G. "Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China." *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China.* Eds. Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 1-22.

Platform (*Zhantai*). Dir. Jia Zhangke. 2000. DVD. New Yorker Video, 2005.

Polumbaum, Judy. "Capturing the flame: aspirations and representations of Beijing's 2008 Olympics." *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. Ed. Chin-Chuan Lee. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2006. 57-75.

Price, Monroe E. and Daniel Dayan, eds. *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008.

Rapfogel, Jared. "Still Lives in Times of Change: An Interview with Jia Zhangke." *CINEASTE* Spring 2008. 44-47.

Ren, Hai. "The Landscape of Power: Imagineering Consumer Behavior at China's Theme Parks." *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation and Self*. Ed. Scott A. Lukas. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007. 97-112.

Ren, Xuefei. "Architecture and Nation Building in the Age of Globalization: Construction of the National Stadium of Beijing for the 2008 Olympics." *Journal of Urban Affairs* Volume 30 Number 2 (2008): 175-190.

Reynolds, Isabel. "Heads in the Clouds." *The Standard* online. 4 September 2002. 24 October 2006 <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/archive_news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=20486&sid=&con_type=1&archive_d_str=20020904>.

Richards, Greg. "Marketing China overseas: The role of theme parks and tourist attractions." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* Volume 8 Number 1 (2001): 28-38.

Rosen, Stanley. "China Goes Hollywood." *Foreign Policy* Number 134 January/February 2003. 94-98.

Rydell, Robert. *World of Fairs: The Century of Progress Expositions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Rydell, Robert, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle. *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000.

Schein, Louisa. "The Consumption of Color and the Politics of White Skin in Post-Mao China." *Social Text* Number 41 Winter 1994. 141-164.

Schein, Louisa. "Performing Modernity." *Cultural Anthropology* Volume 14 Number 3 August 1999. 361-395.

Schwartz, Benjamin I. "The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present." *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*. Ed. John King Fairbank. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968. 276-290.

Shih, Alice. "Jia Zhangke: Life and Times Beyond the World." *CineAction* 53:6 Winter 2006. 68.

Shijie (The World). Dir. Jia Zhangke. 2004. DVD. Zeitgeist Films, 2006.

Snyder, Jack. "S. Florida developers buy Splendid China site." *The Orlando Sentinel* 27 May 2006.

Soja, Edward W. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Solinger, Dorothy. *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Sorkin, Michael. "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park." *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Ed. Michael Sorkin. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. Xi-xv.

Sorkin, Michael. "See You in Disneyland." *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Ed. Michael Sorkin. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. 205-232.

Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

Still Life (*Sanxia Haoren*). Dir. Jia Zhangke. 2006. DVD. New Yorker Video, 2008.

Strassberg, Richard E. *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Sun, Wanning. "Indoctrination, Fetishization, and Compassion: Media Constructions of the Migrant Woman." *On the Move: Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China*. Eds. Arianne M. Gaetano and Tamara Jacka. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. 109-128.

Timmerman, Kenneth R. "Florida Splendid China." *American Spectator* February 1999. 28 September 2009 <http://caccp.freedomsherald.org/mc/prpc1999.pdf>.

Tucker, Joseph D., et al. "Surplus Men, Sex Work, and the Spread of HIV in China." *AIDS* Volume 19 Issue 6, 8 April 2005. 539-547.

Unknown Pleasures (*Ren Xiaoyao*). Dir. Jia Zhangke. 2002. New Yorker Video, 2004.

Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage Publications, 1990.

Urry, John. *Consuming Places*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Wang, Jing. "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital." *Positions* 9:1 Spring 2001. 69-104

Williams, Claire. "Sky Service: The Demands of Emotional Labour in the Airline Industry" *Gender, Work and Organization* Volume 10 Number 5 November 2003. 513-547.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

World Tourism Organization. 24 August 2009 <http://www.untwo.org>.

Wu, Fulong. "Globalization and China's New Urbanism." *Globalization in the Chinese City*. Ed. Fulong Wu. New York: Routledge, 2006. 1-18.

Xiao, Honggen. "Leisure in China." *Tourism in China*. Eds. Alan A. Lew, Lawrence Yu, John Ap, and Zhang Guangrui. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003. 263-275.

Xiao Wu (*Pickpocket*). Dir. Jia Zhangke. 1997.

Xinhua News. "Beijingers opt for suburban travel in shortened May Day holiday." 4 May 2009. 18 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/200905/04/content_11308765.htm>.

Xinhua News. " Can China's homemade theme park overtake Disney Land?" 24 March 2009. 15 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/200903/24/content_11062115.htm>.

Xinhua News. "HK gov't announces expansion plan for Disneyland." 30 June 2009. 15 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/30/content_11627828.htm>.

Xinhua News. "Self-drive holidays popular in China." 5 October 2002. 18 August 2009 <news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-10/05/content_586037.htm>.

Xinhua News. "Self-drive tours popular among holiday makers." 8 February 2006. 8 August 2009 <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/200602/08/content_4152184.htm>.

Xu, Gary G. *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.

Xu, Xin. "Modernizing China in the Olympic spotlight: China's national identity and the 2008 Beijing Olympiad." *The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review* 54:2. 90-104.

Yin, Xiangdong. "New Trends of Leisure Consumption in China." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* Volume 26(1) Spring 2005. 175-182.

Yuen, Sun-pong, Pui-lam Law, and Yuk-ying Ho. *Marriage, Gender, and Sex in a Contemporary Chinese Village*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004.

Zhang, Li. *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China's Floating Population*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Zhang, Yingjin. "Industry and Ideology: A Centennial Review of Chinese Cinema." *World Literature Today* Volume 77 Number 3/4 October-December 2003. 8-13.

Zhen, Zhang. "Introduction: Bearing Witness: Chinese Urban Cinema in the Era of 'Transformation' (*zhuanxing*)." *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. Zhang Zhen. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 1-45.

Zheng, Tiantian. *Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Postsocialist China*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Vita

Mariana Estrada was born in Houston, Texas. After attending Incarnate Word High School in San Antonio, she entered Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In Fall 2002 she traveled to Beijing, China to pursue Chinese language study. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in May 2003, she returned to Texas. In August 2005, she entered the Asian Studies Department at the University of Texas at Austin. After being awarded a Taiwan Ministry of Education Mandarin Language Scholarship in 2007, she traveled to Taipei, Taiwan to further her study of Chinese. She currently resides in Austin, Texas with her partner, Jason.

Permanent address: 8823 Callaghan Rd., San Antonio, Texas 78230

This thesis was typed by the author.